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Burnings and blessings :: the cultural reality of the supernatural across early modern spaces/

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BURNINGS AND BLESSINGS: THE CULTURAL REALITY OF THE SUPERNATURAL ACROSS EARLY MODERN SPACES

A Dissertation Presented

by

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ABSTRACT

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The searches for the cultural spaces of early modern European beliefs in the supernatural have followed many trails. While more complete descriptions of these searches will emerge below, some common features of the picture of these historical inquiries can be briefly summarized. The division between "popular" and "elite" understanding of the supernatural is one such feature of these spaces. Works in the latter category generally focus on an intellectual history of the beliefs that warranted the supernatural; Stuart Clark's distinguished *Thinking with Demons* is an example of this genre. The second, more common, category is the study of popular manifestation of the supernatural in this period. Carlo Ginzburg's *Night Battles* and Robin Briggs's *Witches and Neighbors* illustrate this kind of study. A second feature, particular to the historical works focusing on popular beliefs, is the use of anthropological methods to inform these works. The final element of this historiography is a less common but powerful tool of analysis, geography.

While historians have gained much insight using both these methods, my intent is to expand these results by using two separate sites of research: Normandy, France,

and Kent, England. This work uses these sights and these methods to examine archival records of witchcraft trials from each site over the period 1560-1680. Using a tight geographical focus, qualitative and quantitative features of Norman and Kentish witchcraft are examined. The study ends with some comparisons and contrasts in the results of that research. The overall purpose of the work is to allow an examination of the broader underpinnings of the supernatural in this period.

PREFACE

The first question that perches on everyone's lips, even if it is not verbalized, after I explain the subject of my research ("I am working on witches") is: Do you believe in magic? The answer, for an academic historian is clear: "well, you have to take into account . . .," i.e., we prevaricate. The draw of the supernatural, as an explicatory framework, is longstanding and powerful. As E. E. Evans-Pritchard makes clear, supernatural explanations are found in almost every human culture on the planet and are deeply rooted in the human experience.[1] The serious foundation to that 'first question,' that universal reaction, is a continued popular belief in the possibility of magic, of the power of the supernatural. While the main goal of my research is to illuminate the contours of supernatural beliefs in a specific time and place, early modern Europe, I also hope- if only in passing glances- to reflect on why, even today, we humans seem to want magic to be real.[2]

The true and enduring focus of this work is the tracing out of the roles that the supernatural played in the lives of sixteenth and seventeenth century Europeans. My road to arrive at this place, where spending 4 years of my life exploring this topic was seemingly a good idea (along with much good-will and patience on the part of many dearly-loved people in my life) should be briefly outlined. My fascination both with the period and its supernatural beliefs began, truly, as an undergraduate history major at the University of Vermont. We spent some weeks, in a class who's name I truly

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[1] E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Witchcraft, *Oracles and Magic Among the Azande* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968).

[2] This is perhaps the best place to get the current "vogue" reference out of the way: the draw of J. K. Rowling's books is, of course, a mild reflection of this fascination.

cannot recall, using the "witchcraft craze" as an example of the tensions in early modern European life. Further reading in the period only made me more curious, especially when I read about alchemy and various practitioners of that art, Giordano Bruno being the most captivating. I wondered how a culture could truly believe that lead could be changed into gold? Discovering the nature of such a seemingly foreign culture lying buried within my own captured my imagination.

This "impossibility" of so much of the cultural foundations of the early modern life continued to draw me in. During my graduate education, as I began to zero in on both my interests and topic, I was reading Keith Thomas's work, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* as part of one of my competency exam fields. That work discusses "cunning folk"[3] and witches and their relative places in English society of the seventeenth century. Oddly, I can remember both the precise moment and page where Thomas, in a passing rhetorical moment, remarked that it was unclear why cunning folk were treated so differently than witches, rarely accused by their neighbors and seemingly more leniently treated by the authorities when tried for their magical activities. Answering that question, why were two groups though each acting relatively the same end up being treated so differently, continues to fascinate and intrigue me. As with any good question, it's the echoes of its issues that make the answer so relevant. As with the glances at why the supernatural exerts such a strong pull on our imaginations, I hope to explore these echoes as well.

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[3] The explanations of "cunning folk" will be given in greater detail below, as will the one for their French counterparts, *devin*. Suffice it for this moment to merely say that such 'folk' used magic, served a variety of important functions in popular culture and, generally (though inaccurately) are viewed as "white" magic users.

I would be remiss, in a project of this size and personal importance, not to recognize that I, as almost every historian or author before me, stand on the shoulders of giants (or, as Bono claimed, "every poet is a thief"). My giants, of course, are not simply the intellectual debts I owe to the great historians who have worked this field before me, in better ways than I ever will. Those debts, however imperfectly, will be paid off in the pages which follow, The giants I also stand on are the people in my life who gave me the space, support, time and gifts to make such an effort possible. At the top of my list are two people without whom none of this- not a word, not vowel, not one day's work in the archives-- would have happened: Brian Ogilvie, my advisor and Tim Rushford, my twin brother. Both of them have given unstintingly and critically of their respective wisdom and learning, in vastly different areas.

Material assistance was also given in generous amounts from a variety of sources. The University of Massachusetts-Amherst similarly has been incredibly generous in terms of grants, fellowships and other funding making possible the various and necessary trips to my research sites without which this undertaking would be have been impossible. The History Department at the University has similarly been incredibly generous of both time and support (and various teaching assignments) that have proven to be godsends during my doctoral program. That same generosity and advantage flowed from the weekend jewelry shows Willis Backus, my 'other' brother, provided.

Finally, three people need to be recognized; they each had a crucial role in the creation what follows possible but for very different reasons. Richard Eaton, my high school mentor and so much more. The debt I owe him for opening so many doors

within me is, in a word, incalculable. Gil Kujovich, the teacher who first *forced* me to challenge my intellectual talents and in doing so, forced me to grow into my own. Last but by no means least was Elizabeth Norris- the best roommate ever and a dear friend. She made my personal life in Northampton creative, cozy and rich beyond measure. To each of you, for all your gifts and all the ways you may not have known in which you were building the foundations for me to achieve this dizzying height: Thank you.

I have not yet created a personally satisfying answer to that first question, is magic real? What follows, I hope, will be an answer that addresses an equally important question: How were magic and the supernatural beliefs real for early modern Europeans? To that answer, I now turn.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In early modern Europe, the practice of magic was an integral part of society, forming a part of both elite and popular cultures. The most difficult issue in coming to terms with how important magic was, how deeply the arts of *magia* permeated that world, is that our "modern" culture cannot accept the reality of magic. We reject the beliefs that underlay magic, the practices that controlled it, and the metaphors that sustained it. Most historians studying the period approach this crucial cultural and intellectual issue via witches and witchcraft. However, my dissertation begins with a slightly different focus, with a question left unanswered in Keith Thomas's classic work, *Religion and the Decline of Magic.*[1] In his discussions about the "cunning folk," Thomas notes the integral role that such magic users played in the popular culture of the period. Clearly, all such activities were banned under religious and secular law. Equally clear is the apparent, yet unexplained, fact that few cunning folk were ever prosecuted for their *magia* and, if prosecuted, were treated with leniency. Why, one should ask, were magic users of this kind treated so differently from those accused of witchcraft? In more blunt terms, why were cunning folk blessed but witches burnt?

Summary

The searches for the cultural spaces of early modern European beliefs in the supernatural have followed many trails. While more complete descriptions of these searches will emerge below, some common features of the picture of these historical

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[1] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (London: Penguin Books, 1971).

inquiries can be briefly summarized. The division between "popular" and "elite" understanding of the supernatural is one such feature of these spaces. Current studies of the supernatural are fairly easily divided between these two categories. Works in the latter category generally focus on an intellectual history of the beliefs that warranted the supernatural; Stuart Clark's distinguished *Thinking with Demons* is an example of this genre.[2] The second, more common, category is the study of popular manifestation of the supernatural in this period. Carlo Ginzburg's *Night Battles* and Robin Briggs's *Witches and Neighbors* illustrate this kind of study.[3] A second feature, particular to the historical works focusing on popular beliefs, is the use of anthropological methods to inform these works. The final foreground element of this historiography is a less common but powerful tool of analysis, geography.

My work seeks to understand the popular understandings and relationships that defined the supernatural in the early modern period of European history. To that end, I use both anthropological and geographical tools within my work. While historians have gained much insight using both these methods, my intent is to expand these results by using two separate sites of research: Normandy, France, and Kent, England. By keeping a smaller geographical focus but expanding the range of study across separate regions, my work allows an examination of the broader underpinnings of the

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[2] Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[3] Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996).

supernatural in this period. This aspect of my work is relatively straightforward and consistent with earlier works in this field of historical inquiry.

Modern historiographies, especially within the works of Foucault and Certeau, have placed issues of power into the foreground of historical analysis.[4] However, the kind of subtle focus on relationships of power called for by their work has rarely been applied to witchcraft studies. While an in-depth review of these authors' thought is beyond the scope of this chapter, a brief review is in order to illustrate the relevance of issues of power to the study of the supernatural. Foucault's work focuses upon issues of the technology of power.[5] What Foucault finds is that power, examined historically, operates within and among cultural spaces. That is, power is not a "thing" that can be held, but operates both as a political technology (over the body, in the case of the prison), and as an elaboration of a particular set of doctrines.[6] This elaboration creates networks of unique relationships through which power operates within a cultural system. There are, of course, those who dominate within this system and those who are repressed, but Foucault's work makes clear that the equation of power is not that simple. Rather, power operates as a complex geometry where both dominated and repressed are victims and victors within relationships of power.

Certeau elaborates and expands upon Foucault's work. While Foucault is interested in relationships of power, Certeau attempts to trace the non-systemic, small-

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[4] The works of Ginzburg, Larner and Briggs (among others) do address issues of power, but not in the ways that the thought of Foucault or Certeau calls for. The ideas of power reflected in the works of Ginzburg and Briggs reflect a more simplified version of power—that of power's ability to coerce.

[5] See, for instance, Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1977).

[6] Ibid., 22-23.

scale ways that people in everyday spaces resist the dominant system of power relationships.[7] Using the terms "strategies" and "tactics," Certeau seeks the ephemeral tools that people use to escape from the domination of their cultural systems.[8] These "procedures of everyday creativity" are used to locate issues of power at a different level and arena than Foucault, but they still represent the same kind of question: how does power operate within cultural spaces?[9] Neither a search for overall structures of power nor one for the strategies of everyday creativity has been made central to the search for early modern supernatural beliefs.

Issues of power are clearly important for this area of historical inquiry. While I speak of the supernatural, my work—like the work of all other historians in this field—is based upon a single frame of those beliefs, witchcraft. Lacking any records of what popular culture itself created, the historian of this period is constrained to rely upon instances where popular culture intersected with elite culture so that the beliefs of that hidden, almost lost area can be brought to light.[10] Thus, while one searches for the supernatural, one utilizes cases of witchcraft. Though we may draw out, successfully, broader ideas about popular beliefs in the supernatural from these "intersections," a historian must remember that we have at our disposal only part of what was a much larger picture.

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[7] See, for instance, Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).
[8] Ibid., 34-39.
[9] Ibid., 36.
[10] This includes instances where scholars draw on pamphlets and other documents produced by the elite that can be used to draw out popular beliefs. See, for instance, Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons*; Marion Gibson, *Reading Witchcraft: Stories of Early English Witchcraft* (New York: Rutledge, 1999).

By looking at those points of intersection, one emphasizes the importance of issues of power, issues that lie within the early modern legal system.[11] The dossiers (court records) of witchcraft cases provide the documentary basis for most studies of popular supernatural beliefs. Those accused of witchcraft were brought before authorities, their testimony recorded (in various forms), and their cases judged. Within that legal process, issues of power abound. What are the foundations for the accusations? What claims do the parties make to the case? How do the accused respond to the charges? What elements are necessary to find an accused person guilty? All of these questions rely on an analysis of power to answer them. Those answers can provide insights into early modern beliefs as well as provide new areas of inquiry.

The importance of the legal system is also highlighted by the details of the laws used by both Kent and Normandy. The first English civil statute dealing with witchcraft was passed in 1542. Edward VI repealed this law some eight years later. A second, broader law was passed in 1563. The third and harshest was passed in 1604, and that remained in force until 1736. Thus, for my analysis of Kent, these laws provide the first limits on what was considered witchcraft. In France, while there was no specific law against magic use or witchcraft, almost every case of witchcraft was handled in the local royal civil courts. King Louis XIV proclaimed the first civil law dealing with witchcraft in 1682.[12] As with any other legal remedy within a legal

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[11] There are also literary sources, in the form of both contemporary books and pamphlets, that also provide a different kind of view on popular beliefs. Produced by and generally for the elite, their value in exploring popular beliefs is limited. But see Gibson, *Reading Witchcraft*, below.

[12] This law merely made any case of witchcraft in the local courts subject to automatic appeal to the Paris Parlement. This law is usually interpreted as the "ending" of French

process, the particulars of the law drove both issues of substance and procedure, and these elements greatly impacted the substance of the case.[13] This is a different kind of power, structural in nature, which further emphasizes the importance of issues of power in this field.

An interesting comment present in almost every historical work on witchcraft and the supernatural is the claim made by each author that the sources within his or her study are unique. Whether built on notions of nationality, quantity, or exceptionality, each work seeks to carve out a sense of uniqueness. These historians then treat their "unique" source as representing a more fundamental picture of "European" supernatural beliefs.[14] What my research shows is that these claims are both accurate and misleading. I am not convinced, and my research supports this conclusion, that the commonalities present in witchcraft cases are more important than the differences. Framed a different way, every local expression of the supernatural is unique. Briggs's work in Lorraine is different from MacFarlane's work in Essex, not because of numbers or nationality, but because the structure of supernatural beliefs is inherently

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witchcraft cases, as the Paris judges in the Parlement had stopped "believing" in witchcraft and thus released any person convicted of witchcraft from the *baillages* throughout the French kingdom. Normandy was one area that kept sending cases of convicted witches to the Paris Parlement for years after the 1682 statute. Robert Mandrou, *Possesion et Sorcellerie au XVIIeme Siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 1979), 500.

[13] These ideas will be developed in greater detail below.

[14] For example, Briggs notes that his work on Lorraine "draws on some 400 trials" from that area "because few other scholars have been so interested in quite the same issues, or found the material bearing on them." Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 11. While noting that he will be using these trial documents along with other studies, and that issues of "uniqueness" or "commonality" quickly become very confused, Briggs ends his introduction arguing that no early modern village can be called "typical" (13).

local. While some generalities will link these spaces, the particular is far more powerful, and therefore issues of place become crucial to this search.

Thus, my dissertation has three fundamental intellectual premises: the power of culture, the power of legal process, and the power of place. The first, the power of culture, recognizes that culture operates as a lattice and that magic is an important part of the early modern European cultural lattice.[15] The second recognizes two truths, that much of a historian's knowledge of this period's supernatural is based on the legal system, and second, that power relationships lie at the heart of this period's distinction between witches and cunning folk. Lastly, the power of place recognizes the importance of "place" as a potent element in these equations.

I begin with the principle that every working cultural system makes sense. That is, there are rational, interconnected elements of thought and relationship that tie the pieces of culture together.[16] In fact, social realities are a latticework, binding and holding with a recognized pattern.[17] Each element is a sensible and functional piece within that lattice. The use of magic in early modern Europe, along with all its attendant beliefs, by both cunning folk and witches, fit within the lattice of that period's cultural system. Magic forms a sensible and functional strand of each culture. While such a purely "functionalist" position does not adequately address all the roles that magic played in early modern society, understanding magic's function is a central part of understanding its place in that culture.

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[15] The idea of a "cultural lattice" is drawn from the work of Clifford Geertz. See, for instance, Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).
[16] Ibid., 331-35.
[17] Ibid., 332-33.

The work of Keith Thomas and Alan MacFarlane, for example, employs such a functionalist approach.[18] In this approach, a fundamental emphasis is placed on the role of stress. Early modern life, it is argued, was difficult and full of uncertainty. Interpersonal stresses over limited resources and in the face of an unpredictable environment added more stress to daily relationships at the local level.[19] When these stresses became unbearable (or at least unmanageable through other means), people resorted to supernatural explanations or witchcraft accusations in order to cope with such stress. Robin Briggs expands upon this functionalist approach by adding the notion that guilt, caused by poorer villagers being refused charity, also led villagers to use witchcraft as a means to deal with their emotional stress of denied charity. These explanations are not inaccurate, merely incomplete, as they remove the reality that people believed in the power of witches and feared them. Witchcraft cases do not function solely as a clever way to finesse other social issues; to argue that every witchcraft case functions in that way is to ignore that victims of witchcraft testified to the reality of magic, and that practitioners often claimed the efficacy of their power. Focusing on the entire cultural lattice allows for a diversity of explanations for witchcraft accusations to appear, those based on function as well as those based on power.

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[18] Thomas, *Decline of Magic;* Alan MacFarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).
[19] MacFarlane, *Witchcraft*, 195-96.
[21] Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974).

Within each witchcraft case, some part of the pattern of the cultural lattice is revealed, albeit briefly and dimly, and is therefore revelatory. My goal is to select cases of magic use to determine how and why the use of magic by cunning folk and witches, though similar in nature, was treated so dissimilarly when the practitioners appeared in court. By doing so, I hope to examine the role—the binding and holding elements—that magic had within the culture of early modern Europe, as well as broader, more general elements of Western culture.

Part of the picture of the relationship between cunning folk and witches within their society is also drawn by power relationships. This orientation of my research, the power of the legal system, examines the nature of the records historians generally use to research the supernatural (court records), and inquires into the structure within that system that sustained the supernatural at the popular level. Being named a cunning person called upon a set of intricate social, economic, and cultural factors. The act of naming a neighbor a witch called upon equally intricate cultural factors. Each naming had dramatic consequences. The legal process was the system that worked out those intricate cultural factors; thus, understanding the legal system is important to understanding early modern supernatural beliefs. The two cultural elements are not identical; supernatural beliefs are broader than witchcraft beliefs, and the latter reveals only part of the former. However, because our understanding of the supernatural is built upon witchcraft records, we must be sensitive to the context in which witchcraft occurred.

Sensitivity to power and culture are important elements in this work, as is the final strand of my research, the power of place. The power of place refers to

repositioning the relationship between history and place. This not an original insight; Boyer and Nissenbaum used this idea in their groundbreaking work on the Salem witch trials.[21] MacFarlane's work also illustrates the kind of place-based contextualization that I seek to perform, and both works illustrate the power of historical geography. Because all human actions "take place in space and time, the historian cannot neglect problems of location."[22] What the power of place represents is the mutuality of people and their environment. By this I mean that people have agency within the place that surrounds them, and the surrounding place plays a key role in determining the quality of the agency of the people living in that space. Historical geography has become, in recent years, more than simply mapping location, however. The power of GIS (Geographic Information System) has allowed historians to focus on past places in more contextualized ways. The power of GIS allows for quantitative social data, such as economic features, to be layered upon location maps. The layering of such data upon a place can reveal deeper structures of local belief than was previously possible.[23]

While the power of place frames my work, I do not argue that the supernatural is solely a function of these social realities. Culture is a latticework of beliefs, and while both power relationships and place help to shape those beliefs, no human action can be reduced to these variables, as powerful as they might be. In this sense, I am informed by Michel de Certeau's work and thought. While recognizing that "space is a

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[22] Gordon W. East, *The Geography behind History* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1965), 10.

[23] See, for instance, Alan R. H. Baker, "On Ideology and Historical Geography" in *Period and Place: Research Methods in Historical Geography,* ed. Alan Baker and Martin Billinge (London: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 233-43.

practiced place,"[24] Certeau also notes the transversal element in human activity. By this, Certeau means that in any human space, there is the possibility of breaking out of the homogenous, functional nature of that place. Human action is not, in this sense, purely functional. "What does travel ultimately produce, if it is not, by a sort of reversal, an exploration of the deserted places of my memory, the return to nearby exoticism by way of a detour through distant places and the discovery of relics and legends?"[25] I intend in my work to be attentive to the functional while also seeking out the "relics and legends" of the human spaces I study.

In sum, my research is a cross-regional study of magic in early modern Kent (England) and Normandy (France), drawing upon established work in the field but extending that work in new directions. The linking of focused research to geographical information provides the final element to my work. Cunning folk are a fascinating and little studied group within early modern Europe. Their activities as healers, finders of lost property, and diviners, as well as their abilities to communicate with the dead, make them through a host of other magical practices a clear window into the supernatural world of early modern Europe. Their position on the boundaries between religion and witchcraft, and social acceptability and punishment, also make them an invaluable asset in the study of this period's cultural and intellectual frameworks.

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[24] Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, 52-55. Certeau's distinction between space—the location of human activity—and place—how human paradigms have shaped that place—is central to his work. He writes elsewhere that "stories spatialize by enumerating possibilities, by demarcating the boundaries of what is possible within a given place" (ibid., 105). By writing those stories, a historian can reveal both the contours of space and place. Certeau, *Writing History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 121.

[25] Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, 106-07.

Cunning Folk

What can be said is that across the whole continent
there is abundant evidence for the ubiquity of cunning folk.

Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors* (185).

To seek out the cunning folk, one must have some ideas, some picture of who these magic users were. From our great distance of years, actually the most we can specifically do is describe *what* cunning folk were. Cunning folk permeated deeply and broadly across early modern European spaces. Referred to by a variety names in England, these local purveyors of the supernatural provided a host of services, ranging from "healing the sick and finding lost goods to fortune-telling and divination of all kinds."[26] Cunning folk also provided love charms, found missing animals, and spoke with the dead. Referred to as *devins* (or *devinesse*) in France, the services *devins* provided were remarkably similar, "including love magic, the recovery of stolen goods, information about missing persons, the prediction of lottery numbers and searches for buried treasure."[27] However, for all their ubiquity, cunning folk have rarely been the object of focused study.

The procedures used by cunning folk in England and France as described by Thomas and Briggs appear to be a blend of Christian and pagan beliefs. For example, in order to find certain missing objects, the Vicar of St. Owens, William Newport, inserted a key within a book (usually a Bible) and bound the book with string.[28] After calling on the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the Vicar began calling out names, waiting

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[26] Thomas, *Decline of Magic,* 210.
[27] Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors,* 181.
[28] Thomas, *Decline of Magic,* 254.

for the book to turn upon "hearing" the name of the person or responsible party. "It turned when he pronounced the name of Margaret Greenhill," and the townspeople who had gathered left to search Greenhill's home.[30] In a French example, many cures combined herbal remedies with pilgrimages to the local saint(s)'s shrine.[31] In all the cases related in these works, Christian and non-Christian beliefs were tied together in the practices of the cunning folk. Keeping this facet in mind when reading archival sources provides some clue as to which records present cunning folk.

A recent work by Owen Davies, *Cunning-Folk: Popular Magic in English History*, examines cunning folk over four centuries.[32] While the work has serious limitations, it does offer some insights into the identification of cunning folk in England.[33] Like Thomas and Briggs, Davies offers a functional kind of approach to answering the question, who were cunning folk? For Davies, if early modern magic users performed "beneficial" magic, they were cunning folk. This explains, as other researchers have noted, why few cunning folk were ever prosecuted, because "witchcraft was a threat [but] cunning folk were useful."[34]

What is interesting about cunning folk is their near invisibility in the histories of European supernatural practices. Limited as the historians of these people and the

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[30]Ibid., 254.
[31] Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors,* 181.
[32] Owen Davies, *Cunning-Folk:Popular Magic in English History* (London: Hambledon & London, 2003).
[33] Davies work is more fully discussed in the chapter on Kentish witchcraft, below.
[34] Davies, *Cunning-Folk*, 13. This claim ignores Davies claim, discussed more fully below, that the black versus white magic distinction is not a valid one. He offers no evidence to support this assertion. What cunning folk were useful for was "fortune telling, love, unbewitchment," finding lost property and thieves, healing, and charms for a variety of purposes (95-103).

belief system that supported them are to judicial proceedings, our ability to completely trace the contours of these folk is likewise limited. While writers of the time also referred to cunning folk, our best source of data lies in judicial archives. The power of the legal system thus both liberates cunning folk to be examined and limits our ability to perform that examination.[35] However, in every set of records that historians of witchcraft have searched, cunning folk appear. One can, therefore, tease out these folk from these sources. As I have noted earlier, under civil and religious law, *all* magic was banned, regardless of the intent or "color" of the practitioner.

Literature Review

While cunning folk have rarely been sought out by historians, witches have received a significant amount of attention. Understanding the methodologies and issues in this literature helps to frame my inquiry. A number of works have appeared in this field, especially in recent years where it has seen something of a rebirth in interest from serious scholars. A complete review of such a field of research is beyond the scope of this work. However, by choosing the works that have been the most influential in my own work, the patterns and contours of a much larger field can be traced. My comments upon these works also show the outlines of my own approach to this field.

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[35] As a former attorney, I clearly understand the limitations of the legal system to arrive at "truth." In point of fact, the legal process has never been designed as a "truth" finding mechanism but as a process to decide probabilities of certain conclusions or propositions. For example, in a murder trial, the object of the trial is not to determine who really killed someone but solely to determine the guilt of the accused (or, more accurately, if that guilt can be proven beyond a reasonable doubt). A killer can be found "innocent" yet have actually committed the crime. Because all legal inquiries are structured around a very nuanced process such as that, some caution is necessary for the historian whose main source of data is drawn from legal sources.

As my interest in this question began with Keith Thomas, his work will be the first I review, followed by the others.

Thomas's work offers a direct and deliberate thesis: "The beliefs with which this book is concerned had a variety of social and intellectual implications. But one of their central features was a preoccupation with the explanation and relief of human suffering."[36] Sufferings brought on by the plague, fears brought on by the threat of fire, uncertainty of health, poor food supply, and other maladies, writes Thomas, "were thus features of the social environment of this period."[37] Thomas thus characterizes life in early modern England (the focus of his study) as having a great amount of hopelessness and impotency at the popular level. Obviously, a similarly large amount of anxiety will also exist alongside this helplessness. Caught between the rock of impotency and the hard place of anxiety, people turned to systems of thought that promised relief from the pressures of their life.

Religion and magic were the two competing systems that the popular culture sought out to alleviate the stress of their existence. Both the Church and magic had essentially the same function, namely, "to help men with their daily problems by teaching them how to avoid misfortune and how to account for it when it struck."[38] While Catholic and Protestant hierarchies taught that magic use (and users) was evil, they were spectacularly unsuccessful at convincing their followers of this belief. In fact, one of the distinguishing facets of Thomas's work is his ability to portray magic as a strong and competing paradigm to religion. While fears about "bad" magic users

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[36]Thomas, *Decline of Magic*, 5.
[37] Ibid., 17.
[38] Ibid., 636.

were clearly present,[39] support for "good" magic users was rampant.[40] As Thomas notes, white magic users, these "cunning folk," were present in every village in England. While providing healing may be the best example of their alleviatory functions, cunning folk provided a host of practical and powerful services for their clients.[41] The reality and efficacy of magic use was thus a powerful part of the lattice within early modern popular culture.

Thomas is able to establish the reality of these magical beliefs and supernatural beliefs more generally by recourse to a vast array of sources, both from the elite and popular levels. His command of both the primary and secondary source material is as impressive as it is challenging for those scholars who follow him. Indeed, one of the lessons that any historian of magic must take from Thomas's work is that the attempt must be made to master the field in similar ways. In his chapter on "cunning men and popular magic," for example, Thomas quotes from ecclesiastical sources as well as compilations of court record data. He notes that local preachers "lamented" against the activities of cunning folk, quoting Henry Holland, a Cambridge preacher.[42] Earlier in the chapter, Thomas relies on period church record books to support his claims.

Another lesson that Thomas's work presents is the validity and value of an anthropological method when approaching the study of magic in the early modern

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[39] As importantly, Thomas spends five chapters detailing the beliefs (intellectual, social, and psychological) that supported witchcraft in this period. See chapters 14-18.
[40] Ibid., 291. Thomas notes that during the mid-sixteenth century within Essex county alone, sixty-nine cunning folk regularly practiced. "In Elizabethan Essex no one lived more than ten miles from a known cunning man" (294).
[41] Thomas spends three chapters (7-9) detailing the activities of cunning folk.
[42] Thomas, *Decline of Magic*, 291. Holland complained of the "rude people's" "continual traffic" with such folk. Similar opinions were voiced by the future Bishop of Lincoln.

period. As Briggs notes in *Witches and Neighbors*, belief in magic is incredibly widespread and has been found within a wide variety of societies throughout our history.[43] Such a common phenomenon in human society should be very amenable to study using the techniques and theories developed to study societies more generally, that is, anthropology. Thomas makes his approach clear in his chapters on witchcraft: "A satisfactory explanation of English witch-beliefs . . . has to offer a psychological explanation of the motives of the participants . . . a sociological analysis of the situation in which such accusations tended to occur and an intellectual explanation of the concept which made such accusations possible."[44] While Thomas's work may present only limited examination of each of those areas, and while some of his conclusions within those examinations may be questioned, no serious scholar doubts that his methodological approach is valid.[45]

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[43] Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 373. Briggs refers to witchcraft specifically. One need not go so far as Briggs, however, and whimsically imply (without any rational support) that humans possess some kind of "witch detector" that was hardwired into the human brain during the Paleolithic period (ibid.).

[44] Thomas, *Decline of Magic*, 469.

[45] One area of Thomas's thesis that I have not dealt with is the relationship between the Reformation and magical beliefs. The Catholic Church was a vast repository of magical beliefs and practices (*Decline of Magic*, 55-57). Protestants attacked this aspect of the Church, relying instead on an unknown, unknowable Divine plan (87, 89). However, the populace still required some kind of assistance in dealing with their harsh and threatening environment. The breach created by the Reformation, damaging the efficacy of religious magic, allowed popular magic to step in and gain much authority in English society (179-80). It is beyond the scope of this work to provide explanatory models for the rise and existence of magical beliefs in this period. Similarly, Thomas's explanation for the decline of magical beliefs, while valuable, is not necessary for the analysis I am attempting to do.

A book both difficult to place chronologically and historiographically is Ginzburg's *The Night Battles.*[46] Though originally written in 1966, the work appeared in translation much later in 1983. In the field of historical examinations of the early modern supernatural, *Night Battles* perhaps fits within no category but its author's. While researching the Inquisitorial archives in the Friuli, Ginzburg discovered records, stretching from the late 1500s through the 1600s, of the existence of what he believed to be a pre-Christian fertility cult, the *benandanti.*[47] The members of this cult testified that on the Ember days, they went forth, in spirit, to battle witches for the "health of the crops."[48] Over the hundred years of contact between the *benandanti* and the Inquisition, the beliefs of this "cult" took on the familiar diabolical elements of witchcraft.[49]

As Ginzburg writes, "This transformation, or rather, closer to the truth, superimposition of the inquisitorial schema on a pre-existing stratum of generic superstitions, occurred in dramatic form during the trials themselves, through the molding of confessions of the accused by means of two devices mentioned above: torture and 'suggestive' questioning."[50] Ginzburg admits that the *benandanti* represent a unique case; no other examples of such a belief system have been found. Yet within this work, Ginzburg's methodology, almost *in toto*, is revealed.

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[46] See n. 3.
[47] Ginzburg, *The Night Battles,* xvii.
[48] Ibid., 22. The *benandanti* used stalks of fennel to fight the witches, who used stalks of sorghum (22-24).
[49] Ibid., xvii.
[50] Ibid.

Unlike Thomas, Ginzburg's focus is on the small, the odd, the anomaly. The *benandanti* are an unusual case, not only in their beliefs but also in the fact that historians discovered their existence at all. This idea of micro-history is important in the context of Ginzburg's work. As he stated in *The Cheese and the Worms,* "one cannot escape the culture of one's class and the culture of one's time."[51] Thus, these almost solitary examples form perfect pictures of pieces of the period under study. The *benandanti* represent and reveal that which they testify to. While there may be issues with the ability of the anomalous to represent some kind of "norm," Ginzburg's discoveries do open windows that allow us to see, if nothing else, that culture—especially popular culture—is not a monolithic entity, even though Ginzburg argues that popular belief is uniform.

One of the common critiques of Ginzburg's work (one that he recognizes) is that no similar examples can be found like his Miller or the *Benandanti.* While I agree that using the "stories" that lie buried is a necessary and fruitful strategy, I am also cognizant, especially given my intent to map data, that a few examples do not a data set make. While micro-history allows for the telling of the diverse and different and allows a historian to examine "strata" not generally visible, it also should give the historian pause when he or she goes to draw the "larger" cultural picture.

What is also clear from Ginzburg's work is his notion of the relationship between popular and elite cultures. As the quotation above shows, elite culture exercises power to homogenize popular culture. Since the *benandanti* beliefs existed

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[51] Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmology of a Sixteenth Century Miller*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), xx.

for a long time, according to Ginzburg, absent "attention" from the elite, popular culture would naturally remain isolated and distinct. The precise nature of this relationship is not made clear in Ginzburg's writings, but these two views seem to form strong elements within his work. First, the Inquisition, representing elite culture, is essentially presented as repressive and homogenizing in its contact with popular culture. Second, popular culture is essentially static absent such contact. Ginzburg views this cult as a kind of pagan "holdover," surviving virtually unchanged into the early modern period until the Inquisition focuses its attention on it. However, the *benandanti* may not be the best example of this since, in their early contacts with the Inquisition, they not only testified to their belief about protecting fertility and the people, but also spoke of their work as "Christ's."[52] Absent evidence (which is unlikely ever to surface) about how Christ became a part of this "fertility cult," the import of this paradox is difficult to assess.

What is perhaps the most enjoyable and frustrating part of Ginzburg's work is its intuitive nature. Ginzburg often engages in roaming suggestions about possibilities. Much of the time, the purpose of these sections is to provide possibilities without detracting from his main point. For example, the narrative of *Night Battles* is the slow transformation of pre-Christian beliefs, under pressure, from a fertility cult into diabolical witchcraft. Indeed, the confessions of the *benandanti* show just that. In their first contacts with the clergy, *benandanti* adamantly refused to agree to any diabolical associations and described their activities during the Ember days with clarity and

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[52] Ginzburg, *Night Battles,* 25-26. Ginzburg suggests several explanations for this "contrast" of beliefs (26).

distinetion.[53] By the end of these interactions, the *benandanti* were mouthing the all-too-familiar models of diabolical witcheraft.[54]

Outside of this general narrative, Ginzburg engages in many digressions. For example, in writing of the *benandanti's* relationship to the sabbat, Ginzburg takes time to ruminate about the "reality" of such noeturnal gatherings. Ginzburg states, "Thus a problem which seemed to have been answered in the negative erops up again: that of the *reality* of at least some of the *benandanti's* gatherings."[55] He eites the testimony of a little girl aeeused of witcheraft and coneludes: "We discover . . . a shabby and banal reality—a gathering of people, with dancing and sexual promiscuity. In a number of cases the sabbat must have really been like this, or, more accurately, also like this."[56] This diversion is unnecessary to his narrative, yet Ginzburg offers that final statement as "fact." The single testimony of an eight-year-old girl is taken to establish the reality of some kind of sabbat reality.[57] These intuitive digressions do not help the overall

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[53] Ibid., 7-11. In describing the interactions of Gasparutto with one Fra Felice, Ginzburg deseribes the former as being "stubborn," "exasperated," "unperturbed," and the like. Reading of the interactions between the two, one is struek by the force of Gasparutto's beliefs and the inability of the priest to come to terms with something so outside of his Catholic learning—a similar reaetion, one might say, to our own interaetions with magic.

[54] Ginzburg, *Night Battles,* 137-40. The elements that Ginzburg identifies as "diabolical witeheraft" are appearanee at the sabbat, paet with the devil, and various aets of maleficia.

[55] Ibid., 133.

[56] Ibid., 134.

[57] The work of Murray has been excoriated for attempting to establish just this faet. Margaret Murray, *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962). In his preface, Ginzburg attempts to restriet these kinds of attacks on his work by stating that *Night Battles* does not attempt to answer that element of Murray's work: "No document allows us to conclude with certainty that the *benandanti* actually met on oceasions to perform the rites deseribed in their confessions" (xiii). But that is precisely what he urges in the book itself.

effect of Ginzburg's arguments. The reason(s) Ginzburg engages in these speculations is not clear, though by speculating he may cast his enquiry wide enough to catch the "right" explanation. Ginzburg does not relate his motivations, and the reader is left wondering.

Ginzburg is taken to task for his thesis in general in the next work that attempts to provide an explanation for Europe's reaction to magic use by witches.[58] In *Europe's Inner Demons*, Norman Cohn performs an opposite kind of dialogue with witchcraft from Ginzburg's. Beginning with the second century, Cohn traces the picture of the witch and follows its patterns through the sixteenth century in Europe. An amazing example of the power of breadth, Cohn's work has much to offer, though it too is built upon several theoretical assumptions that need to be examined. Cohn's thesis is that the "witch" was only the latest in the line of stereotyped groups that were a perennial feature in medieval European society. The attributes of the witch can be found being ascribed to Christians in the Roman Empire, as well as to heretics and Jews by the medieval Church.[59] Indeed, the images associated with the early modern witch seem slantingly stable across all these groups.[60] However, the "great witch-hunts" did not

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[58] Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: The Demonization of Christians in Medieval Christendom* (New York: Basic Books, 1975). Cohn writes of *Night Battles*: "What Ginzburg found in his sixteenth century archives was in fact a local variant of what, for centuries before, had been the stock experience of the followers of Diana, Herodias or Holda. It has nothing to do with the 'old religion' of fertility postulated by M. Murray and her followers. What it illustrates is—once more—that fact that not only the waking thoughts but the trance experiences can be deeply conditioned by generally accepted beliefs of the society in which they live." *Inner Demons*, 155. In other words, the *benandanti* were no cult but deeply conditioned trance "victims."

[59] Cohn, *Inner Demons*, 54 and *passim*.

[60] Witches, like the earlier groups, were men and women accused of 1) behavior that violated human morality (killing and eating children, sexual perversities and the like),

and could not occur until two other factors were present. First, authorities needed to believe in the reality of the witch's sabbat. Second, the elite needed to have a judicial process at their disposal that permitted torture.[61] When these two elements came together in the sixteenth century, the witch hunts were certain to occur.

Cohn also dissects other theories of how this belief in witchcraft came into being. He offers that there are two traditional explanations. First, there were in fact some pre-Christian sects, and the Inquisition was in effect stamping out local variants of this sect.[62] The second explanation is that the ideas of witchcraft and the machinery necessary to deal with them that was developed to deal with the Cathars was simply turned against women.[63] Cohn spends some time reviewing the genesis of the first theory, reserving special attention for Margaret Murray.[64] In this section, he destroys the "Murray thesis," showing how Murray misused and misread her sources. Cohn writes that there is simply no evidence that such cults or sects ever existed.[65] Cohn then follows that conclusion with an interesting methodological point, that "stories which contain manifestly impossible elements ought not to be accepted as evidence for physical events."[66]

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2) performing acts of maleficia, 3) making a pact with demons, and 4) being a member of a vast, threatening conspiracy that met regularly at a sabbat. Cohn, *Inner Demons*, 99-101, 147.

[61] Ibid., xii.

[62] Ibid., 102.

[63] Ibid., 102-3.

[64] Cohn describes Murray as "not a professional historian . . . . Her knowledge of European history, even English history, was superficial and her grasp of historical method non-existent. . . . [S]he clung to [her] ideas with a tenacity which no criticism, however well informed or well argued, could ever shake" (109).

[65] Ibid., 124-25.

[66] Ibid., 124. I will return to this idea later.

The second explanation receives equally powerful review. Here, Cohn disproves the notion that the witch "came into being during, and as a result of, the Inquisition's campaign against the Cathars in southern France and northern Italy in the 1300's."[67] As his chapter title notes, this theory is based on three forgeries and one wrong track. Forged documents in three early works created the "fact" of these Cathar witches when in fact they simply did not exist; later historians simply accepted the earlier work as valid.[68] In sum, other explanations the 'witch craze' (beyond Cohn's) simply do not stand up to scrutiny.

Cohn believes that the process of witchcraft accusation happened as follows:

> An old woman is arrested for witchcraft. At once, her neighbors come forward to accuse her of harming their children or their cattle—whereupon the magistrates compel her to admit not only to those acts of *maleficium* but also to having entered into a pact with a demon, having copulated with him for years and having formally renounced Christianity. They also compel her to speak about the sabbat and to name who she saw there. Behind the accusations from below and the interrogations from above lie divergent preoccupations and aims.[69]

Clearly, the sources support this kind of description. As with Ginzburg's work, interesting issues of popular and elite culture are built into this version, as well as other methodological points.

Obviously, like Ginzburg, Cohn posits a "top-down" version of witchcraft.[70] The actions of the "bureaucracy" are determinative of the existence of the witch hunt. Many of the details of the witch's actions are the result of elite pressure, not popular

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[67] Ibid., 126.
[68] Ibid., 126-46
[69] Ibid., 255.
[70] Richard Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials: Their Foundation in Learned and Popular Culture, 1300-1500* (London: Routledge & Paul, 1976) is similarly instructive on this point.

belief. Popular beliefs play a different role in Cohn's thesis than in Ginzburg's, however. The neighbors' ideas about the witch's powers are taken to be fanciful and unreal by Cohn. Where Ginzburg saw a remnant of a pagan holdover, Cohn sees a kind of mass delusion.

The power of the human imagination lies at the core of Cohn's work and is one of the most challenging aspects of his work. He writes that "the great witch hunt can in fact be taken as a supreme example of a massive killing of innocent people by a bureaucracy acting in accordance with beliefs . . . [taken as] self-evident truths. It illustrates vividly both the power of the human imagination to build up a stereotype and its reluctance to question the validity of the stereotype once it is generally accepted."[71] In his afterward concerning "psycho-historical speculations," Cohn argues that the witch hunt was built on massive delusions. Certainly, he states, no orgies, no massive conspiracies, no baby-eating or flying on brooms; none of this happened.[72]

When this delusion became the "central occupation" of the authorities, then the witch hunt exploded across Europe.[73] Cohn goes on to speculate that the root of all these fantasies associated with many groups across Europe's history lies in repressed childhood fantasies and adult desires.[74] While his ideas about this motivation may have some relevance, Cohn's perspective on the "reality" of magic as delusional and fantasy is precisely the kind of attitude that denies a historian contact with an earlier age. Certainly one does not have to uncritically accept the "truth" of the sabbat to write a

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[71] Cohn, *Inner Demons*, 255.
[72] Ibid., 258-59.
[73] Ibid., 259.
[74] Ibid., 262.

history of witchcraft, an extreme position that no responsible historian would take. On the other extreme, reducing an obviously important cultural belief system to delusion and fantasy should be a position that no responsible historian should take as well.

In a more recent work, Robin Briggs has examined the nature of witchcraft and the local social environment in *Witches and Neighbors*.[75] Similar to some of the works examined above, Briggs believes in a historian's "penetration" of the popular in order to come to terms with early modern witchcraft. Contrary to some of the authors noted previously, Briggs's "main focus is on the lives and beliefs of ordinary people who are at once the victims and principal instigators of most [witchcraft] prosecutions."[76] Thus, Briggs uses a small geographic area (though he mines in deeply) to explore the social patterns that would give rise to accusations of maleficia.[77] Using this data, Briggs argues that witch hunts were produced not by elite concerns or at their direction, but were rather born from the tensions and frictions of neighbors. Within the storm of village life lie the sources of witchcraft charges.

Not surprisingly, the centers of this storm are relatively easy to identify. The family was one such center. Briggs notes that "one cannot understand how the nexus of belief and practice [of witchcraft] worked without relating them to the familial context."[78] Many witchcraft accusations were made between spouses, children, step-relatives, and even servants. Those without families, generally older women, were equally at risk for being singled out as witches. Relying on his data, Briggs cites the

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[75] See n. 3.
[76] Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors,* 7.
[77] Briggs does draw on significant research by other scholars in this field throughout the course of his work.
[78] Ibid., 225.

facts that "accused witches were on average much older and slightly poorer than their neighbors. Around half the women accused were widows, of whom a fair number appear to have had no surviving children."[79] The absence of money and family made this latter category of accused witches even more likely to be victimized. In all, the presence or absence of family was the most likely determinant of an accusation of witchcraft.

One of the most valuable contributions Briggs's study makes is to conceptualize the process of witchcraft accusations. Based on his research, Briggs believes that a formal witchcraft accusation was only the final step in a very long process of social dispute resolution. A neighbor might be accused only after years of building tension and informal attempts at resolution.[80] "Witchcraft was about envy, ill-will and the power to harm others, exercised in small face-to-face communities which, although they could often contain such feelings, found it impossible to disperse them . . . Witches were people you lived with, however unhappily, until they goaded someone past endurance." [81] Only when such informal measures failed did neighbors seek the courts. Recourse to the legal system carried significant dangers of it own, from retribution by the accused families to being required to pay court costs.[82] This feature of the witchcraft trial—its long subterranean past within the social dynamics of the local village—roots such accusations in the soil of their origin, one's neighbors.

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[79] Ibid., 264.
[80] See, for instance, Briggs, 161.
[81] Ibid., 398.
[82] Ibid., 273, 354*ff*. This idea, while not new, receives more prominent placement in Briggs's work.

As Briggs argues, however, social explanations alone do not account for the "power of the forces at work."[83] Briggs uses modern theories of psychoanalysis to explain why witches and the belief in their kind of magic were so powerful: "In their contacts with their neighbors, individuals relieved their deeply ambiguous relationships with parents and siblings, redirecting feelings they had never recognized or worked through. Particularly in situations where dependency played a strong part, it was all too possible for murderous hostility to develop and, as the material in this chapter has shown, much of the operation of early modern society can be described in relation to dependency."[84] These ideas of projection and splitting explain why belief in witchcraft was so powerful and prevalent.[85]

A prevalent historiographical idea that Briggs takes issue with is the notion that witchcraft accusations and persecutions were some form of gender war.[86] Rejecting the idea of "an earlier holocaust in which millions of women perished," Briggs suggests a more nuanced view of the role of gender.[87] Relying on statistical evidence, Briggs shows that the gender of the accused witch varied considerably according to region. In France, for example, the percentage of male witches accused seems to have averaged

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[83] Ibid., 163.
[84] Ibid., 164.
[85] Perhaps to avoid criticisms of anachronism, Briggs also argues that "there may be some mental structures which have not changed greatly over the centuries" (165). His paradigm of these processes is startlingly Freudian in orientation (166). He concludes: "Witchcraft trials suggest that our early modern ancestors were scarcely different from us in these [psychological] terms" (166). I intend to argue that, while a potentially valuable tool, psychological principles have little support within the sources or in other period narratives to compel such conclusions.
[86] An idea developed in Stuart Clark's work, *infra*.
[87] Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 259.

about 40 percent.[88] Witchcraft thus "was not a specifically feminine crime," but part of a larger system of beliefs (social, cultural, and intellectual) "within which many other forces operated."[89] Gender was important; one cannot avoid the reality that within early modern Europe as a whole, roughly 80 percent of accused witches were women. However, gender was also not determinative of an accusation either; much more subtle forces were at work. In my work, gender forms one of many socioeconomic factors I examine. I agree with Briggs that witches were burnt not because they were women, but because they were witches.[90]

As Briggs notes in his book, he has left the field of the intellectual backdrop for magical and witchcraft beliefs predominately and intentionally out of his work. That space has been filled by Stuart Clark's *Thinking with Demons*.[91] As Clark writes, his book "began as an attempt to fill a gap in historical treatments of witchcraft . . . [because] no sustained attempt had yet been made to reconsider the views of many intellectuals [involved in witchcraft ideology]."[92] Clark begins his study with a chapter on language, and the power of his work can immediately be seen here. The study of witchcraft, says Clark, forces the historian to face two circumstances:

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[88] Ibid., 260. In Iceland the figure ran closer to 90 percent and 60 percent in Estonia (261). There have been a few efforts recently to inquire specifically into the fate of male witches. See Malcom Gaskill, "The Devil in the Shape of a Man: Witchcraft, Conflict and Belief in Jacobean England," *Historical Research*, 71 (June 1998): 175; Louise Marie, "Literally Unthinkable? Male Witches in Early Modern Europe" (master's thesis, University of Alberta, 2000).

[89] Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors,* 262-63.

[90] The relationship of gender to cunning folk is a question that remains unexplored, given the lack of focused research on them. My research may bring gender into fuller play if it turns out that more men were cunning folk (and left alone by the authorities). Similarly, gender may recede if gender seems irrelevant to the naming of cunning folk.

[91] See n. 2.

[92] Clark, *Thinking with Demons,* vii.

> One of them is a seemingly fundamental feature of witchcraft beliefs themselves: they appear to have been radically incorrect about what could happen in the real world. No doubt there were sometimes people in early modern communities, deemed witches by their neighbors, who actually sought to cause harm by something called witchcraft. But even so, we are inclined to think that their practices are void of any real effects and that the harm must, therefore, have been imaginary. . . .
>
> . . . The second circumstance is the development in modern philosophy of an overwhelming preoccupation with language and its workings.[93]

Both the inability of many historians to accept belief in witchcraft on its own terms and the related methodological importance of a historian doing precisely that are two of the critical reasons why Clark's work is so successful. He does precisely that.

What Clark reveals in his work is that there were three crucial features of early modern language systems that helped authorize witchcraft beliefs: "logical relationships of opposition, metaphors of inversion and schemes of classification" all formed the foundation for the intellectual's ability to conceptualize witchcraft.[94] Clark begins his examination with the example of festivals and sabbats. What his analysis makes clear is that witchcraft (along with many other early modern cultural beliefs) required, first of all, a system of dual classification.[95] For example, the witch was experienced within a limited range of duality: morally, physically, and symbolically.[96]

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[93] Ibid., viii-ix.

[94] Ibid., 8. More specifically, Clark notes that this dual classification required "an act of recognition with three distinguishable elements: first, a general awareness of the logical relation of opposition, a familiarity with the particular symbolic systems that made it possible to interpret the actions of demons and witches as inversions; and, thirdly, the grasping of just what positive rule or order was implied by any individual inversion that they (allegedly) committed" (31).

[95] Ibid., 31. Clark cites Ecclesiastics to open this chapter: "All things are double one against another: and he hath made nothing unperfit." (42:24).

[96] Ibid., 33. The witch possessed opposites to what was right, physically "by the spatial metaphor of inversion," and a variety of perceptual categories: light/dark, day/night, human/animal, and so forth (33).

Within each of these categories, the witch (as an agent of evil) was an oppositional figure, based on duality, to those who acted for good. The language system of dual classification meant that for each "thing" in the world (person, idea, figure, or symbol), a single opponent existed.

Obviously built within and alongside this notion of dual classification was the language system of contrariety, for the dual nature of the early modern world was based on opposition, on enemies. Evil and good were a necessary consequence of each other, one being deficient in the other's qualities.[97] This notion of contrarieties was the foundation for many and diverse areas of learning in this era. Clark examines its importance in the fields of physics, natural magic, medicine, psychology, and ethics.[98] Each of these fields revealed the idea of contrariety. Thus, there should be little surprise, given this system, that "evil" magic users had their opposite in "good" magic users.[99]

Finally, Clark shows the importance of the idea of inversion within the ideation of the period. Inversion lies at the heart of the systems of dual classification and contrariety. Ritual witchcraft is the perfect example of the language system of

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[97] Ibid., 45. As Clark notes, within this period, "if there was no good in the world we could not speak of its privation; to the extent we speak of evil, good is presupposed. Conversely, knowledge of evil was a necessary perquisite to knowledge of good, given that each term depended on its contrary for its own meaning and force" (45-46).
[98] Ibid., 46*ff.*
[99] Ibid., xx *ff.* In a somewhat surprising move, Clark argues that such "white" magic users were of more significance than their evil counterparts, using several sources to show that *maleficia* was of smaller concern than the propensity of the populace to seek out cunning folk (459-62). This seems to run contrary to Briggs's conclusions, as well as those of others.

inversion.[100] The sabbat is the perverted contrary of the Mass, the acts done by witches there the inverted acts of those done by the faithful at communion. The diabolic pact, for example, is the opposite of baptism.[101] Disorder and misrule lie at the heart of inversion; inversion turns the world upside down. The witch-Christian duality merely reflects the larger duality and contrariety of Christ and Satan.[102]

Having established the basic contours of the geology of early modern language systems, Clark then proceeds to lay out the specific applications of these ideas within the areas of science, politics, history, and religion. Clark is masterful, not only in his treatment of these subjects, but in the depth and breadth of his learning. While clearly a book about the elites of early modern Europe, his work has striking implications for any work done in this field. For example, one motivation for the existence of and support for cunning folk, at the popular level, may be the acceptance of such "white" magic user's inevitability. If witches exist, cunning folk must surely as well, and if the one practices *maleficia*, the other must perform *miracula*.[103] In the end, Clark's focus on language, on the rational nature of cultural systems, and on these systems of ideas is the most important element of his work for those who follow him.

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[100] Ibid.. 69-70.
[101] Ibid., 83.
[102] Ibid., 81. In a chapter entitled "The Devil, God's Ape," Clark writes: "If early modern thought was pervaded by dual classifications of things 'positive' and 'negative,' this was due in no small measure to the absolute primacy of the opposition between God and his adversary and its asymmetrical, yet complementary, character." Clark, *Thinking,* 81.
[103] I lay out my justification for the use of these terms below. I will note that Clark also cites a period writer, Houdard, who sets out this duality of miracle and *maleficia* (83).

In Marion Gibson's *Reading Witchcraft*, we take a turn into a different kind of historical narrative.[104] Gibson opens her work with a section on methodology, which in fact characterizes her entire work. Much of *Reading Witchcraft* is a description of how to read witchcraft sources rather than conclusions about the nature of witches or magic use. Like Ginzburg, Gibson believes that, even with the "noise" of judicial modeling of belief and the reporting biases of pamphleteers, the voice of those accused of witchcraft can be heard.[105] Gibson characterizes her method as "picking at the seams," hoping to unravel the three separate voices within the documents.[106] The three voices she teases out are the witch (the victim), the magistrate (judicial process), and the author of the pamphlets (a variety of different people).[107] Gibson's work is frustratingly tentative, but raises several important issues for consideration.

Gibson begins her methodological work with an example. On March 18, 1612, a woman, Alizon Device, was walking along a road and met a pedlar, John Law.[108] She asked Law for some "pinnes" and he refused.[109] Sometime later, the pedlar fell ill and accused Device of witchcraft.[110] These are the only shared facts of the three different reported versions of the event. In one version, given by the young woman, the story tells of the pedlar refusing to sell her pins and a conversation with a black dog that

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[104] See n. 4. Gibson's sources are a variety of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century pamphlets written to provide popular accounts of the trials of various alleged witches. See appendixes 1-3 (pages unnumbered).
[105] Gibson, *Reading Witchcraft*, 7-8.
[106] Ibid., 62.
[107] Ibid., 9-10.
[108] Ibid., 1.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid.

agreed to lame the pedlar.[111] In the second version, told by the pedlar, Device attempted to beg the pins and he refused, falling down lame afterward.[112] In the third version, given by the pedlar's son that his father had told him, having recovered from his encounter with Device, the woman had asked to buy pins, his father had refused because she had no money at the time, but he then gave her the pinnes, changing his mind.[113] What, then, do we make of these stories?

What Gibson concludes is that there is no possibility of finding out what "really happened" along that meadow road in 1612. What a historian can do, however, is to "explore the truthfulness of the stories of Witchcraft, looking at who told them and why, how they were recorded, how they might have been distorted or stereotyped and at factors which shape their presentation in print."[114] What Gibson is after is not explanations of how witchcraft operates, but rather questions of authorship, genre, style, and ideological position. As she admits, she wants to perform a kind of Foucauldian "'genealogy' of witchcraft" stories.[115] This kind of exploration is intriguing, as it halts the unconscious drive to "rationalize" magic so that it makes

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[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid., 2.
[113] Ibid. The pedlar's son describes his father's affliction in greater detail and, as Gibson notes, there is a strong similarity between what we might call a stroke and his father`s symptoms (2).
[114] Ibid., 4.
[115] Ibid., 6. Because under this kind of exploration. "truth is no more a version of reality which satisfies an audience or which cannot be proved or disproved more conclusively," Gibson does not ask questions of validity but questions of reality.

sense to us, while it is perhaps all the more frustrating because the method does not seek to explain how such beliefs worked within the culture at large.[116]

What Gibson's work also does is to call into question one of the main arguments within both Thomas's and Briggs's work. For both of those historians, the essenee of the witehcraft aecusation lies in the denial of charity, in the frustrations of neighbors' little aets of refusal. As Thomas argues, the witchcraft accusation occurred because of the accuser's guilt over refusing the "witch" charity.[117] Gibson's use of the pamphlets shows that three different narratives are built into witches' testimony. There are examples where an aecuser denies charity and is harmed; one version of the Alizon Device story suggests just that result. The second type of witch narrative is where the witeh seeks revenge for some slight.[118] Like the denial-of-charity stereotype, the witch as revenger has its own specifics. The witch is done some injury, she becomes angry and threatens the vietim, and, at some point, the threat eomes to pass.[119] Unlike the "denial" narrative, there is no request that motivates the witch's anger, merely some kind of harm or slight.[120] The final type of narrative that Gibson finds within the witches' stories is "motiveless malignancy."[121] These stories imply precisely what their

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[116] Gibson states that while Thomas's focus (and those that follow him) on the social status or gender of the vietims is "legitimate," one can read these stories to achieve a much different kind of truth (8).
[117] Thomas, *Decline of Magic*, 662-63.
[118] Gibson, *Reading Witchcraft*, 94-96.
[119] Ibid., 97.
[120] Ibid., 97-98. One intriguing example of these kinds of narratives is where a witch is hired to cause harm to another; there is no direct relationship between the witch and the victim (100-1). Gibson calls these examples narratives of "professional revenge" (ibid.)
[121] Ibid., 101-3.

title says: their narrative reveals no motive, but the accuses are made victims of witchcraft nonetheless.

Of course, this distinction between separate narratives may be less compelling than first appears. All of the narratives do not describe the entirety of the history or background of the people involved. What may be read in a pamphlet as malignancy without motive may simply be the lack of facts, not a lack of motive. If Master Lister's pamphleteer (or magistrate) discovered no reason (or ignored it) for Jennet Preston's killing of him by witchcraft, that need not mean that none existed.[122] What is compelling about this work is the care and treatment of the differing voices within these sources. Gibson, unlike others who seek out particular stories within the witch narratives, attempts to let the sources speak more neutrally.[123] By "decoding" the texts in this way, Gibson shows the differing parties' constructions of reality.

One point that results from this work is that the witch had a voice, even within the legal process that sought to force her narrative along certain lines. Gibson relates the "confession" of Elizabeth Frauncis, accused of harming several people by occult means.[124] Within her confession, Elizabeth tells an entirely other story as well: her sleeping with a lover who later refuses to marry her, the abortion of his child, sleeping with her husband before their marriage, wishing for the death of her children, and

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[122] Ibid., 108.
[123] For example, Ginzburg's work is often criticized for its emphasis on finding the pre-Christian fertility cult. See Ginzburg, *Night Battles, supra*. The motive for the search can take on a stronger emphasis than letting the documents speak for themselves (if that is even possible).
[124] Gibson, *Reading Witchcraft*, 26.

quarreling (often) with her husband.[125] Other witches constructed their tales of *maleficia* to absolve their own guilt and shift blame onto other witches or demons.[126]

In one interesting case, a cunning woman confesses to very limited acts of witchcraft, but also details all the ways she helped her neighbors and provided positive good for her community, mostly as "witch finder" and healer.[127] What these stories remind us is that victims of witchcraft accusations remained, however tentatively, agents of their path. To avoid the only penalty available for conviction of the felony of witchcraft, which was death, men and women chose strategies. Some claimed the power that others sought merely to accuse them of. Especially in cases involving cunning folk, a historian must remember that these people often *claimed* the power they were believed to possess.

Finally, a provocative extension of Thomas's work, using the same theoretical framework but with a much smaller gaze, is MacFarlane's *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England.*[128] MacFarlane uses techniques that no other major historian had employed in the examination of witchcraft: the application of geographical principles to his place of study. Even though his work predates that of the other authors reviewed thus far, MacFarlane's use of these tools allows a crucial variable to come into the foreground of our understanding of early modern magical beliefs, that of place.

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[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid., 28-30.
[127] Ibid., 27.
[128] See n. 18. The book is an extension of MacFarlane's doctoral thesis, written under Thomas's direction. MacFarlane's work is focused on and limited to the county of Essex, England.

Examples of the power of place analysis abound in the book, but two examples should suffice to illustrate its importance.

First, the location and distribution of witchcraft persecution in Essex show that belief in witchcraft was constant and pervaded the bedrock of rural life in Stuart and Tudor England.[129] The frequency and spread of accusations throughout Essex provides proof of that fact.

More relevant to my work are MacFarlane's descriptions of the victims of *maleficia* seeking the aid of cunning folk. As MacFarlane notes, the sum total of cunning folk cannot be decisively determined, but at least forty-one are noted in the records.[130] As he further notes, "No one in Essex lived more than 10 miles from a cunning man."[131] Generally, it seems, formally accusing somcone of being a witch was the final step in attempts to handle local questions of bad fortune, health, or death (whether for humans or animals).[132] One informal step that was commonly taken before that formal accusation was "the consultation of a cunning man, witch-finder or witch-doctor."[133] The presence of so many *magia* users, combined with the reality that very few were ever brought to charges, underscores the basic question driving my research. MacFarlane's answer that cunning folk were rarely touched because they were doing "good" belies the fact that *all* magic was considered evil and illegal, and

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[129] Ibid., 30.
[130] Ibid., 103
[131] Ibid., 110.
[132] Ibid., 104-5. This model is not surprising. Because of the cost and "foreignness" of the legal process, even in modern societies courts are always places of last resort. The western "rule of law," in a backward kind of way, encourages avoiding courts.
[133] MacFarlane, *Witchcraft*, 115. MacFarlane's use of the last two terms in this string is curious. Neither term was employed during the period, and the last is a pejorative term drawn from the age of European imperialism.

many actions of cunning folk were identical to what witches were accused of.[134] More work must be done to probe this question more fully: why were cunning folk untouched? Simple answers involving "black" and "white" magic should not suffice.

Even with this limitation on cunning folk, MacFarlane's work demonstrates the power of geographical tools. In chapter 11, MacFarlane traces the economic and social relationships in witchcraft accusations. His work shows that pressures from population shifts and the economic dislocations due to a newly developing textile industry had no effect on the pattern of witchcraft accusations.[135] While witches were generally *poorer* than their alleged victims, the evidence does not support the image of witches as destitute or beggars.[136] Both of these results call into question traditional assumptions of witchcraft historians. Also, the number of female victims of witchcraft accusations appears to be around 60 percent of the total, a result that does not exactly line up with other continental figures.

MacFarlane, as does Thomas, sees a unifying element of witchcraft accusations to be "begging combined with grumbling or cursing when refused."[137] This fits within their paradigm that witchcraft accusations represent a kind of social safety valve, or a form of negative social control. Drawing on the anthropological work of Evans-

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[134] The laws proscribing magic were all drawn up and enforced by the elite. At the popular level, magic held a far different role. Briggs's theory that the naming of a neighbor as a witch was the result of long simmering tensions obviously calls into question whether the elite proscription meant anything at the popular level. This would not explain why cunning folk remained so few in number in these acts of naming; cunning folk performed much of the same kinds of magic as witches.

[135] MacFarlane, *Witchcraft*, 148-49.

[136] Ibid., 150. MacFarlane characterizes this economic difference as a "class" issue (ibid.). I hesitate to apply that term to early modern rural England.

[137] Ibid.. 151-52.

Pritchard, these accusations are a way to legitimize bad feelings about a neighbor and a way to resolve them. Similarly, MacFarlane (as do others) sees a unifying element to be that formal accusations are made only after a long period of rising bad relationships and unfavorable interactions.[138] Age also seems to be a factor, though MacFarlane notes that the use of the term "old" obviously does not quantify or help determine the age differences.[139]

In sum, MacFarlane's work is inspiring. His use of geographical tools allows myths about witchcraft and magical beliefs to be replaced with place-based data. A clearer picture of the locale of these accusations can then be seen. His work also further illustrates the highly social and relational phenomena that such beliefs are made of, tied to the cultures and times of their making. While MacFarlane's maps and graphs seem quaint in this age of 3-D GIS imaging, his work reinforces the place-based nature of European witchcraft. A historian cannot ignore the context of these beliefs. One of the most striking limitations about his work—and MacFarlane himself notes this—is its focus on a single county. In order to see the broad patterns of English and European witchcraft, more work like MacFarlane's must be done across various locations.

Having traveled this road of review thus far, what conclusions can one draw? First, the value of anthropological methods cannot be questioned. Thomas's work opened vast windows into the structure of early modern magical beliefs by focusing on the social construction of those beliefs. Briggs's work extends that understanding. As Briggs notes, magic and witchcraft are almost universal human constructs; their reality

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[138] Ibid., 159.
[139] Ibid., 110.

can thus be examined by looking at the particular society that created them. One can theorize, as Briggs does, that years of discontent lay behind a formal accusation, yet some cases refute that kind of conclusion (or at least call it into question). We can allege that the roots of witchcraft accusations lay in the guilt over denied charity, but some witches' narratives negate that assumption. What remains to be done, however, is the kind of deeply focused social mapping of witches and magic users that this model demands. This kind of social mapping, as MacFarlane's work points toward, will provide a richer and deeper contextual understanding of early modern supernatural beliefs.

Further, sources must be read carefully and deeply. One cannot simply expect that the roots of these beliefs will be easy to find and understand. All of the historians noted in this review apply great sensitivity to their sources. MacFarlane's use of geographical tools and Gibson's nuanced deconstruction of witchcraft narratives stand out because of the richness of their results. Accessing the foundations of such beliefs, ones that run so counter to our modern metaphysics, so counter to the scientific picture that eventually pushed magical beliefs aside, requires sustained effort in the sources.

The value of micro-history, I think, is quite clear. Briggs's work, as well as MacFarlane's, reveals a particularly local nature to witchcraft beliefs. While Clark's intellectual history can show how such beliefs operated in the culture at large, to show why cunning folk were spared while witches were burnt requires a social understanding. That understanding is built upon local relationships. I limit my study to two regions during a specific time period, 1560-1680. While this lens is fairly narrow

within that time and those places, I agree with Ginzburg (and others) that, while magic was a central feature of the period, we can view its nature best using that kind of gaze.

Given the local nature of my work, my focus is on the popular appearance of magic use and users. I do think that one can also approach the intellectual development of magical beliefs from this perspective, especially using multiple sites. There are works tracing the appearance and importance of elite magic in this time period. Clearly such practices are an important part of magical beliefs. Equally clear is the reality that such beliefs and practices by the elite do not translate to the local, popular level.

By combining regions within my study, I also hope to bring other factors into sharper relief. The most obvious one that using Catholic France and Protestant England should provide is the role religion played within this equation. By combining very local research across two early modern spaces, I hope to illuminate what the purely regional studies might overlook.

The choice of Kent and Normandy were made following a more general search of archival holdings in various places in Europe in the summer of 2002. I wanted to study regions that had not been gleaned as completely as, say, Essex had been by MacFarlane, as well as areas that had some commonalities and contact. Both Kent and Normandy lie close to their respective capitals, and contain several large cathedral towns and universities. While their size is dissimilar, each had both a political and cultural identity separate from the places around it. All of these similarities allowed variables such as religion, polities, and everyday life to be somewhat constant.

The additional factor that only the English Channel separates the two regions from one another geographically was also a major factor in my choice of sites. Kent and Normandy have been connected in a variety of ways throughout much of their histories. For example, when the French Huguenots were forced to leave Normandy throughout the French Wars of Religion, one place they fled to was Kent.[140] Even as England and France grew apart across the early modern period, these two regions continued their connection. This contact allows one to ask the specific question: why in Kent and not in Normandy (or vice versa)? The differing patterns of local beliefs between these regions were not due to a lack of contact. Other factors must have been at work. Thus, Kent and Normandy were chosen as my regions because they provided almost perfect places for the kind of research I wanted to do.[141]

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[140] One of the interesting features of Kent town life in this period is the formation of "stranger" communities (generally, Protestants fleeing from various wars along the Channel coast). Jacqueline Eales, "The Rise of Ideological Politics in Kent: 1558-1640," in *Early Modern Kent*, ed. Michael Zell (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2000), 298.

[141] One of the other factors involved was a negative one: I did not want to study an area consumed by the "witch craze," as the dynamics of those kinds of events do not lend themselves to discovering the kind of popular beliefs I am interested in examining. Neither Kent nor Normandy experienced the kind of craze that consumed other regions. Finally, I chose Kent and Normandy since they were political units, and thus the search for archival material had some initial coherence to it. One facet of "region" my research shows is that a political region may not track a cultural region. One explanation for the diversity of Norman witchcraft cases is that its political boundaries contained many local popular regions.

CHAPTER 2

"Shepherds, Always the Shepherds": The Contours of Norman Witchcraft

Unfolding the Map

Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun.

Max Weber

He must have been afraid. This Norman shepherd, this Louis Levilain, he should have been afraid. Accused of *sorcellerie*,[1] Levilain stood before the local court in Fréauville (La Manche)[2] in April of 1649, with his life hanging on his testimony. Another local shepherd, Pierre Lasnel, had already confessed to using magic and attending the sabbat,[3] and had also testified that Levilain used magic as well. But Levilain refused to submit, to confess, even to agree that he had ever done evil. In the face of his neighbor's accusations and those of the judge, Levilain retorted: "Je suis devin et que les devins ne font pas de mal ("I am *devin*, and *devins* do not cause

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[1] The French equivalent of sorcery, though it covered a wide range of both "good" and "bad" magic use. Specifically, both Lasnel and Levilain were accused of causing harm to the horses and sheep of a local noble. This case is examined more fully below. Throughout the chapter, I have chosen to use the most common spelling of each person's name within the archival record. The court reporters are not consistent in spelling, and many different variants exist within each dossier.

[2] Fréauville is a town within the modern department of La Manche. For ease of recognition, I will locate all small town or village names referred to in this chapter in parentheses, giving the modern day department within. Thus, Fréauville (La Manche).

[3] While not technically correct, I use the term "sabbat" to refer to someone's attending a witch's convocation (at which the devil usually appeared), rather than the word used in the dossiers (the court files), "Sabbath," as modern readers tend to associate the latter term with a normal mass.

harm").[4] Here are two men, both shepherds; one submits to the beliefs of the clite world—of the devil, the pact, the sabbat. The other man denies that reality with complete conviction, and reveals an entirely different, popular view of magic. What follows is a glimpse into the world of Louis Levilain, a Norman world of popular magic to which other witchcraft studies have thus far paid scant attention: a male world of the supernatural.

Within this one case, certain basic features of that world are illuminated, features that are at once familiar and foreign. As one might expect, Norman cases reveal concerns about the devil, about the sabbat—familiar notions associated with European witchcraft. Unexpectedly, the Norman archives also show a male world; accusations against men form approximately 80 percent of the cases. Of those, the overwhelming majority are shepherds and pricsts. As unexpectedly, some of the accused claim their "power," rather than shy from its authority. Why would Levilain lay claim to a status and agency so different from Lasnel's, the shepherd who accused him? By using these Norman archives, the parameters of the answer to that question can surface.

The Norman archives of the early modern period are both rich and startling in what they reveal of the supernatural beliefs of the region. I have used the various court records produced when an individual was accused of and arrested for some kind of magic use. The crucible of that confrontation—the trial process that brings together judge, witnesses, and the accused—provides us with early elements of the answer to

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[4] Archives Departmental de Maritime-Maritime (ADSM) 1 B 3336. In England these magic users are called "cunning folk," while in France, they are generally referred to as "*devins*."

our question. While the elite (the judges and educated few) produced pamphlets and books about the supernatural (witchcraft, ghosts, spells, etc.), these works reveal more about the minds of the elite than the world of the popular culture.[5]

These sources make clear that, for the elite, all magic use was suspect if not unlawful. Magic users were arrested and interrogated, even if *devins* (cunning folk) suffered that fate less frequently. At various times the interest of ecclesiastical and/or civil authorities may have wandered, but whether someone used "white" magic or "black," found lost sheep or harmed the same, the employment of "mystical powers" was banned. For the "third world,"[6] magical abilities of both kids were valued and feared simultaneously. Farmers did not distinguish between white and black magic; they merely wanted their problem fixed.[7]

For both elite and popular culture, the use of black magic, *maleficia*, was treated seriously. Because *devins* were regarded historically as "white magicians," one quick (and easy) answer to the question of why they were treated differently might be that bad magic, *maleficia*, was viewed differently from white magic. Certainly, any magic user who used black magic was more likely to be a target of accusations, and this distinction might explain certain cases. However, judges (and religious figures) sought to convict any and all magic users, not merely the "black" ones. Such an easy

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[5] For an analysis of such sources in England, see Gibson, *Reading Witchcraft*.

[6] A term used to describe the popular level of belief in the early modern period, a world neither Christian nor pagan but an amalgamation of the two. The vast majority of the population of the period lived in this third world. See, for instance, Peter Clark, *English Provincial Society from the Reformation to Revolution* (Rutherford: Fairleigh University Press, 1977).

[7] Whether that problem was a sick cow, a lost money purse, a dead relative, or a meddling neighbor.

answer also flies in the face of the reality that many of the spells and the magical arsenal of the *devins* were decidedly negative in intent and application.[8] Indeed, the notion that "talking with the dead" is somehow "better" than other kinds of spell casting fits our modern notions of good and evil, but may not fit early modern popular distinctions.[9]

Moving beyond the limited answer suggested by a good-versus-bad magic distinction, focusing on the trial suggests other clues to an answer. Within the context of a trial confrontation, it was not only the guilt or innocence of the accused that was at play. The trial also provided a cultural space for the confrontation between elite understandings and popular understandings of the supernatural. Within this disputed space, power relationships of various kinds came to the fore. Focusing on those disputes allows for an examination of both the beliefs of the parties involved in the trial as well as the power relationships involved. While most modern treatments of the supernatural use a functionalist, anthropologically based model to explain supernatural

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[8] One of the most important insights provided by Evans-Pritchard's work on magic in the Zande culture is that "magic" is predominately contextual in nature. For example, in the Zande culture, witchcraft is socially acceptable while sorcery is not. One of the most sought-after forms of witchcraft in the Zande culture is vengeance magic (whose intent and result is the killing of one's neighbors). Easy distinctions between "good" and "bad" magic simply cannot provide the answer to the question posed. See E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968).

[9] And this distinction does not explain why, as we shall see, some of the accused claim only to be doing white magic (though they know how to do the "bad" things), while the witnesses against them generally state that the defendants do only harm.

accusations, using the legal process as a lens allows for an expansion of our understanding of these beliefs.[10]

The anthropological model conceptualizes the power relationships at play as social ones. That is, during times of social stress, popular culture seeks out marginal figures who are used as "targets" to mediate that stress. Witches, thus, are targets of neighborly accusations (and beliefs) because they are socially marginalized and have incurred some kind of long-standing enmity from their neighbors (often denied charity). The trial, in this framework, is viewed as the final step in a long-brewing situation. Anthropological historians see victims of witchcraft accusations as victims of social labeling rather than "real" witches. As with the good magic/bad magic dichotomy, this explanation suffices for some of the accusations. In Normandy, there are cases that reflect both high social stress and apparently long-standing disputes. However, as the case of Levilain (and others like it) illustrates, some people claimed this magical power not because of enmity or social stress, but because of a belief about how the world worked. While Keith Thomas does not reduce "witchcraft" to mere social forces, neither does he seem to appreciate the totality of roles the supernatural played in this period. While much will follow about this subject, the functional approach simply does not cover every case of supernatural accusation, nor does it completely reflect the life of those in the third world.

A close examination of these trials shows a distinctive set of beliefs and relationships that illuminate different ideas and concepts about the supernatural. In this

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[10] This model is drawn from the work of Keith Thomas, Alan MacFarlane, and Robin Briggs.

examination, the works of Miehel Foucault and Miehel de Certeau are critically important. The dynamies of repression and ageney outlined by Foueault are clearly at play in the context of a trial.[11] Similarly, Certeau's foeus on the strategies and taeties that allow the "repressed" (often popular) eulture to resist the power of the elite provides a useful model to perform a different kind of analysis of these kinds of confrontations.[12] While most historians working within the field usually study the witch trials, many do not foeus on the trial as a source in itself.[13] An example of making use of the legal process as a souree is the work of Clifford Geertz. In his essay *Local Knowledge: Fact and Law in Comparative Perspective*, he examines the nature of "legal knowledge."[14] Noting that the legal proeess is not an event but a representation, Geertz states that

> the rendering of fact so that lawyers ean plead it, judges can hear it and juries ean settle it is just that, a rendering: as any other trade, seience, cult or art, law, which is a bit of all of these, propounds the world in whieh its deseriptions makes sense . . . the "law" side of things is not a bounded set of norms, rules, prineiples, values or whatever from whieh jural responses to distilled events ean be drawn, but part of the distinctive manner of imagining the real.[15]

In other words, the legal proeess does not simply express eultural values, it ereates them. This point is crueial. The trial should be viewed as a negotiated space, where

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[11] For example, Foueault, *Discipline and Punish*. More will be said about the application of these ideas to the trial records, below.
[12] For example, Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*.
[13] For obvious exeeptions and the sourees of these insights, I point to the work of both Christina Larner, *Enemies of God: The Witch-Hunt in Scotland* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981) and Ginzburg, *Night Battles*.
[14] Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983): Larner, *Enemies of God*.
[15] Geertz, *Local Knowledge*, 173.

three distinet parties—the accused, the accuser(s), and the judge—are interacting. Furthermore, different segments of cultural identity are also given voice. For example, elite culture can be heard coming from the mouth and mind of the judge,[16] while the accused, the witnesses, and the accuser generally voice elements of popular culture. Together, these three voices meet, jostle, and fight for priority and predominance. That negotiated spaee illuminates, as each voice is teased out, elements of each cultural representation.

The way each person speaks within the trial is critical. As the law is "a vision of a community not an echo of it,"[17] the manner with which people construct their vision is extremely important. Beyond the world that each person describes, the relative power of each voice becomes critical as well. In fact, given that these trials "resolved" the issues between the parties, each trial must be seen as a space where meaning is negotiated. Thus, Levilain's denial of the accusations of *sorcellerie*, that claim by a simple shepherd to be a *devin* (and *devins* do not cause harm), contains more than simply a statement of a fact. The claim reflects a world, a different world, from that of the judge.

If the law is, most accurately, a kind of social imagination and the trial the place where that imagination is given a hearing, what kind of world do those records reveal? A Norman world full of fear and power, a world inhabited by magic and the

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[16] Though one must be hesitant to place any of these players solely in one such "group." In all likelihood, judges "speak for" elements of both popular and elite cultural elements. However, clearly the dominant voice of these players lies in the group with which they identify and, thus, it is fair to describe the judge's "voice" as that of the elite, and the accused's "voice" as that of the popular culture.
[17] Geertz, *Local Knowledge*, 216.

supernatural. Those accused of causing harm, of *maleficia*, will be condemned. Brooding figures feared or marginalized by their neighbors will be accused. Shepherds like Levilain also live within this world, people who believe in the agency of magic, its routine place in their lives. People who heal animals, cure the sick, and craft potions and *sortilèges* for these tasks—for these latter people, magic is a tool, a resource to aid and protect themselves. The conflict between this positive popular view of magic and the more suspicious elite view occurs during a trial. The popular view of magic also explains why magic is not always taken seriously; sometimes it is used as a way to make people laugh. The consecrated host will also figure in this world, as ideas of heresy become linked with ideas of magic. While the negotiated space of the trial is complex and slippery, the early modern Norman supernatural world does emerge, in part. This world is dominatingly local in nature, with multiple and conflicting patterns.[18]

The local world of Normandy highlights these webs and patterns on both a theoretical and specific level. The first section of this chapter provides a summary of the social world of Normandy, covering the years 1540 through 1680. This is followed by an overview of the legal process and archival holdings of Normandy. Then, a brief quantitative examination of the data of Norman witchcraft cases is followed by a review of specific witchcraft cases. The final section explores the implications of my

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[18] My research in Normandy does not convince me, for example, that Thomas or Briggs were somehow "wrong" in their conclusions, but that the nature of the supernatural is inherently local in the early modern popular world. What makes sense in Lorraine is foreign in Normandy (and, of course, vice versa). See Geertz, *Local Knowledge*. Furthermore, as will be explored, the absence of in-depth court records in Kent makes the proof of this point for that place more difficult.

research within the field of witchcraft studies and illuminations provided by my examination into the supernatural world of early modern culture. At its end, some elements of why Levilain claimed his status as *devin* and thus refused to submit to the world imagined by the judge will be revealed.

The Social Geography of Normandy

Normandy is a region of France lying approximately ninety miles to the northwest of Paris. While Americans know the area either for the D-Day beaches or as the birthplace of William the Conqueror, its history is much more diverse and complex, especially during 1540–1680. Normandy underwent tremendous change and upheaval, culminating in the establishment of royal authority by the king of France throughout the region. Like the rest of France, Normandy at this time was predominately rural, with roughly 90 percent of the population in the region living in communities with fewer than a few hundred people.[19] In most cases, the boundaries of the local parish, traditionally Catholic, defined the boundaries of the village.[20] In Normandy, the exceptions of Rouen (the seat of the region's *parlement*), Caen, and Cherbourg did not contradict the reality that the great majority of the French population lived in villages.

As Thomas notes in *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, rural life was full of its own peculiar brand of hazards: famine, weather, and accidents all plagued the day-to-

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[19] Michel de Bouard, ed., *Histoire de Normandie*, 2nd ed. (Toulouse: Privat, 1970), 325-37.
[20] Ibid., 334-35.

day life of the rural poor.[21] Such conditions made for a life at once unstable and unchanging, as little aid came to relieve rural populations during this time. In fact, many historians note that French rural life became, in some ways, unstable during this period because many small farmers lost title to their land and were forced to become agricultural day laborers instead.[22] In some areas, like Normandy, day laborers made up 90 percent of the area's population.[23] The disappearance of the family farm in this area coincided with the appearance of the rich, large farm owner (who often leased his lands to these day laborers).[24]

This increasingly fragmented social world of early modern France can be seen when looking more closely at the social and economic challenges facing ordinary people at this time. Religious conflicts broke out mid-century, and this instability plagued Normandy. As Robin Briggs notes: "Most Frenchmen must have experienced the last four decades of the sixteenth century as a period of difficulties and dangers. The political and religious conflicts known as the Wars of Religion may have been the work of relatively small minorities but the destruction and disorder they brought proved both widespread and longstanding."[25] Briggs goes on to describe not only these destructive events but also a variety of social and economic changes that plagued the lives of ordinary French people.

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[21] Thomas, *Decline of Magic*, 17.
[22] See, for instance, Bouard, *Histoire de Normandie.*
[23] Ibid., 336-340.
[24] Ibid., 335-38.
[25] Briggs, *Early Modern France:1560-1715* (New York: Oxford University Press. 1998), 1.

When population figures rose sharply during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, this increase put large burdens on an already overtaxed agricultural system to provide more surpluses for these new mouths.[26] As noted in the French sources, one impact of this rising population pressure was a shift from small- and moderate-sized farm holdings to larger, tenant-based farms worked by day laborers.[27] Inflation and rising prices for staples like grain also made peasant life more difficult.

The most destructive force in the social fabric of the period was not economic, however, but religious. By the 1540s, conversion to the new Protestant faith in France was in full swing. One of the centers of Huguenot power was in Normandy, and both Caen and Rouen had sizable Protestant majorities, as did the southern and western areas of France.[28] These areas initially formed sources of popular resistance to the French Catholic church and, later, military resistance to the French Catholic monarchy that lasted from the 1560s through the early 1600s. The early tensions between Catholics and the new Protestant reform churches[29] reached a boiling point in 1562, when the first in a series of religious wars broke out across France. The impact of these wars was disruption and dislocation at the local level.

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[26] Ibid, 6-7.

[27] Ibid., 7. Briggs also states that jobs for these farm workers became harder to find and, thus, their wages dropped through the sixteenth century.

[28] Bouard, *Histoire de la Normandie*, 362-63; Briggs, *Early Modern France*, 16-17.

[29] While mostly Calvinist in orientation, some of these reform movements had more in common with Catholicism than "mainline" Protestantism. In France, these new Protestants came to be referred to as Huguenots. Robert Jouet, *Et La Normandie Devint Française* (Paris: Mazarine, 1983), 184-85.

The religious conflict was never completely resolved until the Edict of Nantes in 1598, and that peace itself was fragile and unsteady.[30] Perhaps the best example of the unease with which these two faiths existed lies in the tragedy of the well-known St. Bartholomew's Day massacres in the fall of 1572, when Parisian mobs murdered some 2,000 Protestants in two days, with lesser massacres occurring across France.[31] The casualties were less severe in Normandy, though similar attacks occurred in both cities and villages. Three to four hundred Huguenots were killed in Rouen alone.[32] These wars raged across the French landscape and destroyed and disrupted harvests, consumed animals and food, and killed men and women. Lasting over one hundred years, the wars allowed only minor breaks for recovery by the local population.

Plagues, smallpox, and other epidemics, as well as local crop failures further pressured Norman villagers.[33] According to Briggs, major health crises occurred during the years of 1596–97, 1630–31, 1648–53, and 1661–62. Phillip Hoffman points to 1550–74, 1589–94, and the years around 1625 as periods of particular hardship.[34] In

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[30] The Edict recognized the existence of the Huguenot churches and "allowed" Protestants to worship according to their beliefs as a minority faith in France. The Edict was revoked in 1685 by Louis XIV, and many Protestants, under threat of arrest or other penalties, simply left the country (many, like my ancestors, fled to French colonies in Canada).

[31] Amable Floquet, *Histoire du Parlement de Normandie*, 7 vols. (Rouen: Edouard Frère, 1840-1845), 5:615-746.

[32] Mark Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629* (London: Oxford University Press, 2005), 94.

[33] Floquet, *Parlement de Normandie*, 5:634. Floquet's history notes several periods of famine noted in the records of the Rouen parlement, notably 1631 and 1650 (5:556, 647).

[34] Philip Hoffman, *Growth in a Traditional Society: The French Countryside, 1450-1815* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 100-1.

each of these periods, the impact of war and taxes made local peasant life (and productivity) especially difficult.[35] Overall, the life of the French peasant became harder during the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Many formerly stable peasants slipped back into poverty and a subsistence-level existence, losing whatever lands their families once owned.[36] Hoffman also notes the shifts and changes in the economic life during this period.[37] His work supports Briggs's description of the shifting life of the French peasant: over the seventeenth century, the number of farms held by peasants dwindled, as did the size of their farms.[38] As Hoffman concludes, "few peasants were self-sufficient."[39]

One group that Hoffman points to as "escaping" (to a certain extent) the increasingly difficult life of the peasantry was shepherds. One form of stable wealth was animals.[40] Briggs notes: "The importance of such animals in the economy of the uplands was reflected in the number of shepherds, drovers and muleteers who moved with their beasts."[41] According to Hoffman, shepherds were among the wealthier of peasant groups, and "sheep were a commercial enterprise, raised for sale because they could be transported long distance. . . . The parishioners watching over the sheep may

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[35] Ibid.
[36] Floquet, *Parlement de Normandie*, 5:644.
[37] Hoffman. *Traditional Society*, 36.
[38] Ibid., 37.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Floquet, *Parlement de Normandie*, 5:645.
[41] Ibid.

have been modest but they were engaged in capitalist agriculture."[42] Contrary, perhaps, to our modern notions, shepherds were not among the poorest in the local setting but, especially during a period of vastly unstable and difficult farming times, among those who had a comfort margin based on their flocks.[43] This analysis is important, as we shall see. In Normandy shepherds were the ones most likely to be accused of *sorcellerie* and related acts of magic.

The final dynamic that impacted rural life was the tension between the local nobility and the French kings. Long-standing and ancient reciprocal duties bound these two groups together, as did monetary obligations. Over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, however, the French kings attempted to replace local power with their own, centralized authority. These attempts, while sporadic and occasionally unsuccessful, made local life less secure. The lack of political and social security of the period can be highlighted by the revolts by local nobles such as the Fronde (1648–1651) and peasant revolts such as the Nu Pieds in Normandy (1639).[44]

Drawing from information, several generalizations can be made about Norman life in the countryside during the sixty years on either side of 1600. First, peasant life was precarious, with especially hard times occurring around 1590, 1620, and 1650. The causes for these "spikes" of hardship were, among other things, war (both religious and

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[42] Hoffman, *Traditional Society*, 25.

[43] Later in his work, Briggs characterizes shepherds as "socially isolated" (*Early Modern France*, 193). Given their stability and wealth economically, that conclusion seems based more on our modern notions of a shepherd's life rather than an accurate portrayal of the period in question. Given their interconnection with a variety of players in the marketplace, shepherds may have led solitary lives in some respects, but not in the one that mattered the most: economic resources.

[44] Jouet, *Et La Normandie*, 192-200.

political) and the destruction associated with it, taxes, and a variety of epidemics. Second, between these "spikes," recovery was slow and fragile.[45] Finally, certain groups would have felt less of this social and economic hardship; both the nobility and certain wealthier peasant groups would have been relatively isolated from that reality.[46] One of those groups who seemed to be relatively insulated, by the nature of their work, was shepherds.

The Archival Landscape of Norman Witchcraft

One of the most striking features of this landscape is the number of records available. The Norman archives for the early modern period are held in four locations: the Archives Nationales (AN), the departmental archives, local archives, and town/city libraries. Sources for investigating the supernatural can be found in any and all of these locations. While primary sources are held in the first three, local libraries contain a surprising number of interesting local monographs and small publications. Interestingly, only a few cases from Normandy appear in the AN; most of the actual case records are held in the local archives.[47] Thus, my research centered on four local archival sites: Rouen, Caen, Evreux, and St. Lo.[48] These sites, especially Rouen,

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[45] See Hoffman, *Traditional Society*, 100-7 and passim.

[46] Briggs, *Early Modern France*, 50-52; Hoffman, *Traditional Society*, 199-205.

[47] I found only two cases of Norman witchcraft (appealed from Rouen) held in the Archives Nationale.

[48] The archives of Rouen cover, largely, the modern-day department of Seine-Maritime; those of Caen, Calvados; those of Evreux, Eure; and the archives in St. Lo cover La Manche. Thus, these four sites make up the overwhelming bulk of the early modern Norman territory. The richness of these sources allow for many other questions to be addressed. For example, a review of the differences between local bailliage court

proved to be rich sources of Norman witchcraft cases—over 325 cases touching on the supernatural were located in the archives.

Civil and criminal cases were processed through a variety of local courts. While France had no law specifically prohibiting the use of magic, the number of Norman cases reveals that the "crime" of witchcraft was recognized and enforced.[49] The files of witchcraft cases (referred to as "dossiers") are in two forms: *plumitifs* and *arrêts*. The *plumitif* is a transcription of the proceedings and testimonies of the case.

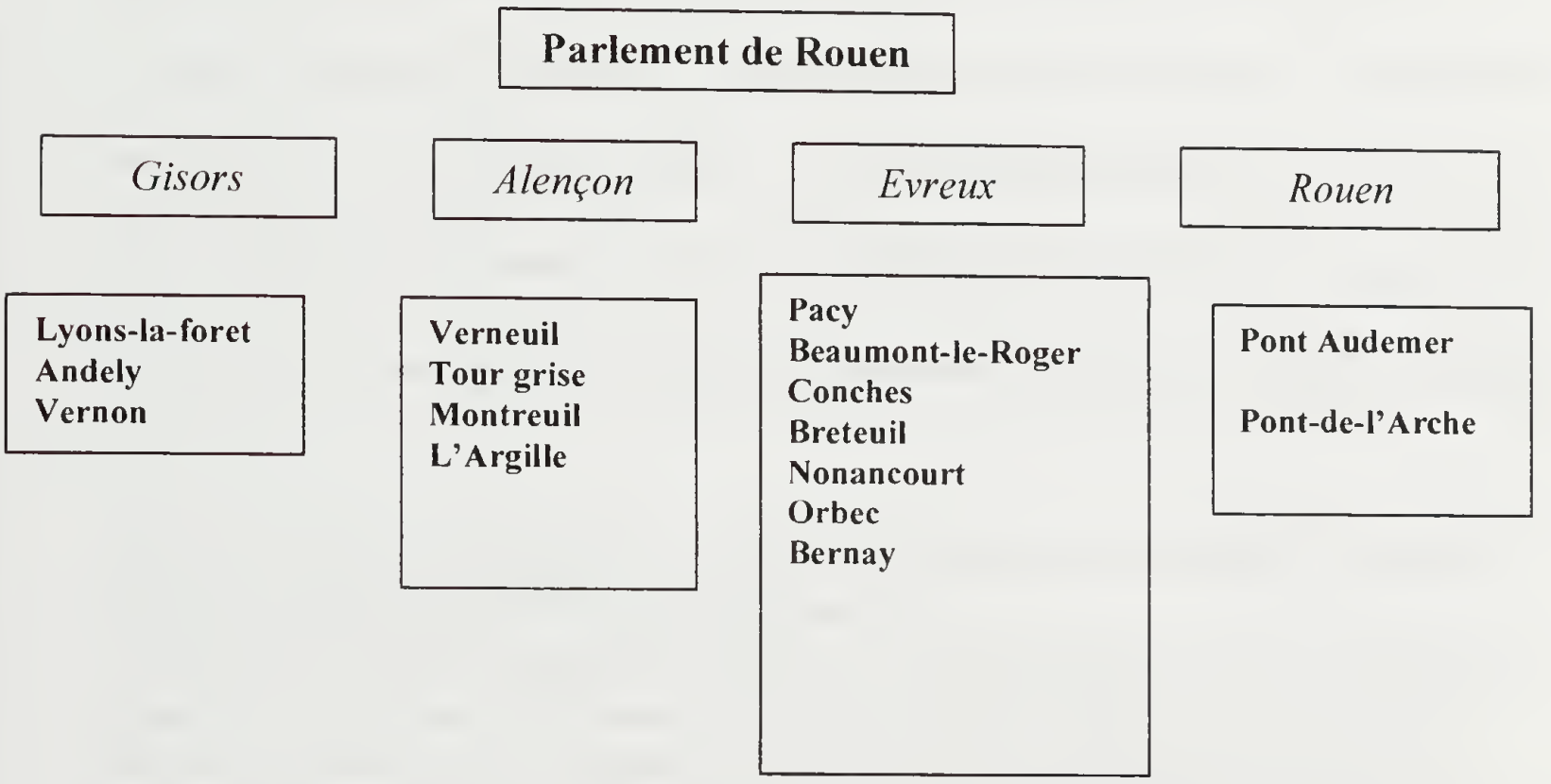

Figure 1.1: Secondary Courts in Normandy

Source: *Cours et Jurisdictions de L'Ancien Regime* (Evreux: Conseil General, 1999), xii.

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sentences and the Rouen parlement sentences might add some interesting insights into political and social realities of the region, as would reviewing which cases were not appealed.

[49] The impact of this absence is unclear. Perhaps the variety of cases in the Norman archives is explained by the absence of any clear directive as to what behavior was considered illegal. Obviously, the local judges would have wide latitude in finding the accused guilty of a crime when the defendant could have no idea about what he might be found guilty of.

The *arrêt* is the summary of the allegations and results of the case.[50]

What this schematic shows is that local, seigniorial, and secondary baillage ("district") courts were held across Normandy.[51] The district courts were accessible throughout the year as long as a sitting judge could be found.[52] Cases from these district courts were appealed to principal baillage courts. There were seven such principal baillages in Normandy, covering dissimilar areas and districts.[53] Beginning in the 1500s, cases from these secondary courts could be appealed to the principal "chief" court of the area. In Normandy, the parlement of Rouen was the chief court during this time period.[54] If further review of the principal court's decision was sought, that appeal

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[50] There is obvious overlap between the content of these two documents. Each case should theoretically have both a *plumitif* and *arrêt*.

[51] This is an example covering the part of the modern Department of Seine-Maritime. Figure 1.1 shows four of the seven principal baillages and some of the secondary baillages within this area. Interestingly, Bernay is listed as being both within the Aleçon and Evreux baillages. There is also one baillage that appealed directly to the parlement of Rouen, Charleval, and had no intermediary court. Michel Le Pasant and Claude Lanette, eds., *Cours et Jurisdictions de L'Ancien Regime* (Evreux: Conseil General, 1999), xii.

[52] One difference between Norman witchcraft and Kent witchcraft is the number of cases connected to each place, 332 versus 162, respectively. One explanation for this difference might be that French courts were more available than English courts. See *infra*.

[53] I refer to both these local and principal courts as the "secondary courts." Because so many cases were appealed, local archives would hold few case documents—the lower court records were forwarded to the appellate courts.

[54] This observation holds true but for a short period during the Wars of Religion, when Protestant forces held Rouen and a Catholic, monarchist parlement was formed in Caen.

was relayed to the Parlement of Paris.[55] Given the number of cases, this system provided quick and easy access for local legal complaints. Appealing those initial decisions would have been equally easy.[56]

The 332-plus witchcraft cases are not spread out equally among the archives. The archives of St. Lo, for example, hold no primary sources at all.[57] The archives of Evreux have approximately twenty local case dossiers concerning witchcraft. Though their archives suffered some damage during World War II, the vast bulk of the holdings were preserved.[58] The local archival material in Caen is in roughly the same shape as in Evreux, with some smaller baillages having gaps for certain years while the larger

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[55] As with all legal systems, there was a procedure intended to short-circuit this normal process. Letters of remission were a kind of personal appeal to the king, which provided for an appellate "review" outside this normal process. There were some cases of witchcraft appealed using this procedure. See, for instance, Pierre Braun, *La Sorcellerie dans les lettres de rémission du trésor des Chartres* (Paris: Fayard, 1979).

[56] While this assumption turns out to be true, the explanation for the ease of appeal may be more difficult. William Monter begins this kind of work in his article, "Toads and Eucharists: The Male Witches of Normandy, 1564-1600," *French Historical Studies* 20, no. 4. (1997): 563-95, 580-81, and he notes, anecdotally, that many of these cases were appealed. Certainly, the penalties involved in cases touching on the supernatural could be severe (banishment, loss of livelihood, and death), and that might provide sufficient explanation for the apparent certainty of appeals in witchcraft cases. What would support that explanation is a review of all cases carrying similar penalties to determine if all such cases were routinely appealed. However, there is no docket for the secondary courts.

[57] Because of the destruction of the city during the invasion of France by the Allied powers in World War II, all documents from before 1792 no longer exist. The archives do hold various local journals and other publications, but cases of La Manche witchcraft would be found only in Rouen, and these cases would be only the ones that were appealed.

[58] A few examples will suffice. The Archive de Eure's criminal *plumitifs* are missing some local baillage records for the earlier years of my study. Pont-Saint-Pierre and Louviers, for example, have criminal *plumitifs* only for the years 1642-1789. Some of the other baillages (Pont-de-L'Arche, Grisors, and Evreux) have records stretching back to the 1300s. There are approximately some sixty volumes in all of Eure's archives covering the years of my study that hold criminal cases of all kinds.

baillages possess the vast bulk of their records.[59] When we reach Rouen, however, this picture changes dramatically.

The archives of Seine-Maritime hold both their local case records and the parlement of Rouen's (the principal court) holdings as well. There are some 150 volumes for the years 1560–1680 of criminal matters, covering both *plumitifs* and *arrêts*. While certain holes exist in their coverage, they are few. For example, there is a large break in *plumitif* records between 1556 through 1590. Another large hole in *plumitifs* occurs between 1631 and 1646, where only two volumes survive.[60] The *arrêts* for this period are also spotty, with the years 1630–33 no longer extant. Several other minor breaks exist, such as between 29 August 1607 and 12 November 1608 for the *plumitifs* and certain months in the *arrêts*. However, the overall archival coverage for the period is approximately 83 percent.[61] Based on this wealth of archival material from all four sources, a researcher can be sure that a clear, evidentially strong picture of the details of Norman witchcraft will emerge.

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[59] One of the interesting features of Norman witchcraft is that place matters intensely as far as the quantity of accusations. For example, Caen does not appear to have been overly concerned with magic, and the supernatural appears infrequently as a crime during this period. Thus, few cases survive that arise out of Caen.

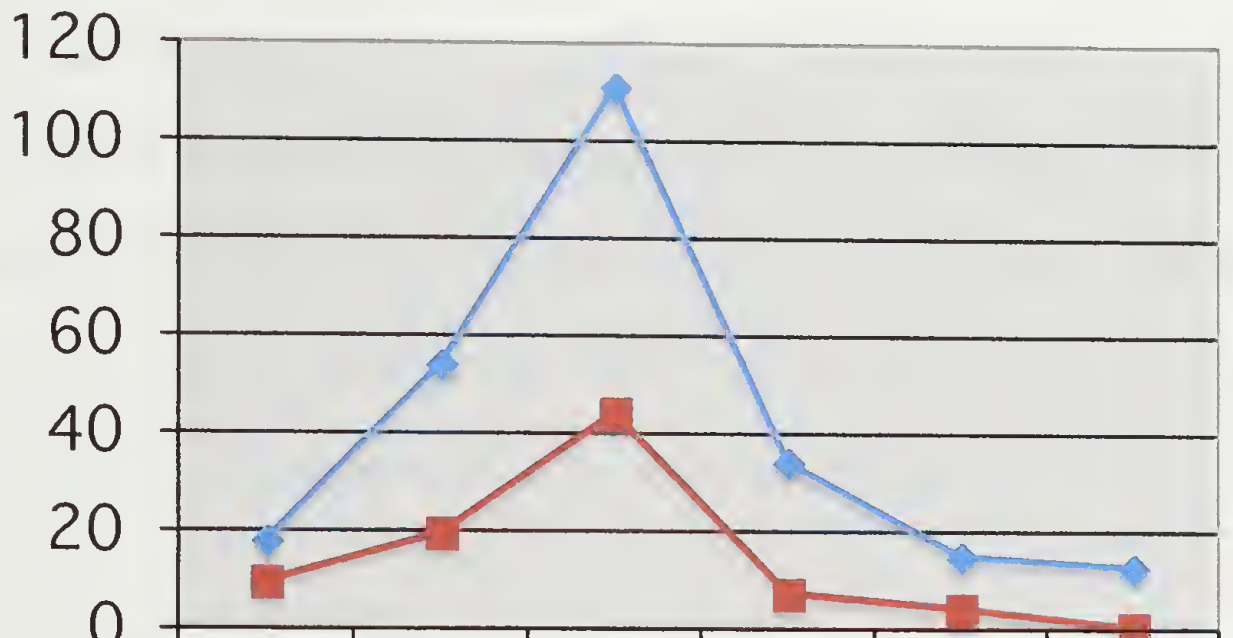
[60] ADSM, 1B 3034 and 3035, covering the dates 12 November 1633–November 1634, and 10 November 1634–November 1635. In fact, for the period 1630–45, only about 31 percent of the criminal records survive. These gaps, obviously, impact both the total numbers reflected in my quantitative analysis as well as the completeness of my qualitative analysis. However, the numbers in surrounding years do not reflect different patterns, numbers, or qualities. Therefore, while gaps exist, they probably do not affect the overall accuracy of the analysis made herein.

[61] Taking the number of months between 1560 and 1680, reviewing the months covered by the Rouen archives, and dividing those two numbers arrived at this figure.

The Initial Features of Norman Witchcraft

At Paris, people don't believe in witches and we hear nothing about them; at Rouen they believe that witches exist and there one always hears about them.
Liselotte von der Pfalz, Louis XIV's sister-in-law, 1718

Within the unsteady social milieu of early modern life in Normandy, Louis XIV's sister-in-law made clear that witchcraft in Normandy was a peculiar affair, even when judged by its contemporaries.[62] One of the most commonly held ideas about early modern witchcraft is that those accused were overwhelmingly women or, at least, mainly so. My research indicates that, in Normandy, the opposite is true.



	1560-1580	1580-1600	1600-1620	1620-1640	1640-1660	1660-1680
Men	18	54	111	34	15	12
Women	9	19	44	7	4	0

Figure 1.2: Graph of Norman Witchcraft Cases

Source: Archives de Calvados, Archives de Seine-Maritime, Archives d'Eure, Archives de La Manche, Archives Nationale, (and secondary sources cited herein)

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[62] French commentators and historians writing after Liselotte also note the peculiar aspects of Norman witchcraft. See discussion, *infra*. Modern historians have also noted certain of these features. Monter, "Toads and Eucharists;" Mandrou, *Possesion et Sorcellerie*, 219-30.

This chart highlights the fact that males accused of witchcraft outnumbered females, and did so by a factor of varying, but always large, degrees. In the "light" periods where the number of accusations was low (1550, 1640, 1660), the factor varies from 2:1 to 3:1. In periods where the volume of such accusations was high, the factor varies from 3:1 to 5:1. In every period, accused men outnumbered accused women. No matter what else can be learned from Norman witchcraft cases, my research reinforces Briggs's conclusion that witches were burnt because they were witches, not because they were women.[64] Women accused of witchcraft disappear from the dossiers of Norman courts after 1630 and thus present an anomaly when compared to other regions studied (Kent, for example).

A second, more captivating element of this chart is the increase in the number of accusations of males that occurs between 1580 and 1640. As noted in the brief summary of the region's history, some of these years form the relatively peaceful period after the Wars of Religion in France and at the beginning of resistance to the

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[64] In fact, women were almost never accused of or tried for witchcraft after 1635 in Normandy. Interestingly, and perhaps related to this odd reverse gendering of witchcraft in Normandy, is the relatively late lack of interest in the sabbat on the part of Normandy's judges. Various sources note that the first mention of the sabbat appears in 1585 in the case of Alison Hocquart. Of the cases I have worked through, little mention is made of or interest shown in the sabbat until the mid-seventeenth century. Note the case involving the *devins*, *infra*.

growth of royal authority in France. This fact contradicts one of Thomas's main observations, using a "functionalist," anthropological methodology. According to this model, supernatural beliefs "had a variety of social and intellectual implications. But one of their central features was a preoccupation with the explanation and relief of human suffering."[65] Sufferings brought on by the plague, fears brought on by the threat of fire, uncertainty of health, poor food supply, and other maladies, writes Thomas "were thus features of the social environment of this period."[66] Caught between the rock of impotency and the hard place of anxiety, people turned to systems of thought that promised relief from the pressures of their life, and supernatural beliefs were one such place of refuge.

What these data show is the opposite of Thomas's conclusion. In Normandy, when things became relatively more stable, popular attention to the supernatural (as reflected in the number of accusations made) rose. Indeed, averaging the number of cases across the same periods highlights this. In the two decades after 1560, there were about 2 cases per year; for 1580–1600, about 7 per year; for 1600–20, about 15 per year; for 1620–40 about 4 per year; for 1640–60 about 1.7 per year; and for 1660–80, about 1.2 per year.[67] Thus, the years surrounding 1600 were the severest in terms of numbers of witchcraft accusations, but were more settled in terms of their unrest. These

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[65] Thomas, *Decline of Magic*, 17.

[66] Ibid., 17.

[67] William Monter notes that periods that reflect cases of four accusations per year are considered "high" in one region he studied. Monter, *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland: The Borderlands During the Reformation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), 156.

data show that a functional description of the witchcraft accusations alone cannot provide the complete picture of early modern beliefs in the supernatural.

Norman Narratives of Witchcraft

What kind of man was generally accused of witchcraft in Normandy? Interestingly, it appears that shepherds were the main targets of such accusations, numbering approximately 50 percent of all cases located. Accusations against priests form the second most numerous category. The kinds of accusations leveled against these two groups are different.[68] In June of 1619, Oliver Thiemy a shepherd, was accused of *sortilège*.[69] He was found carrying a "pouch of herbs" and a "small bottle." Thiemy had been called by some of his neighbors to heal some sick animals. Apparently, the "healing" did not work out as well as the neighbors expected; Thiemy was accused of harming the already sick beasts and was arrested. The judge believed that the bottle and pouch were "diabolical methods" ordinarily used by *sorciers*. Thiemy, in his testimony, offered no other explanation except to say that he used the pouch and potion to heal and did not cause the sick beasts any harm: "The bottle contains foodstuffs ("*denrées*"), among them Joubane and are used to heal animals."[70]

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[68] There are certain features that occasionally cross over. For example, a common feature in clerical cases involves misuse of the consecrated host. Shepherds are sometimes accused of using the host in their *sorcellerie* as well.

[69] ADSM, 1 B 3290. The dossier is some twelve pages long. *Sortilège* is the casting of spells.

[70] In all the cases, both in Kent and in Normandy, I translate the text as a direct discourse between the judge and accused or witness. While this is not a direct translation of the notes contained in the respective dossiers, I feel it makes for a more lively narrative.

Thiemy went on to say that the drugs were not applied on the animals but on the neck or feet of a sheep, while saying a novena. After prayers are made to God—both Our Fathers and Hail Marys—for nine days, on the final day the sick animal should be given a dish of olive oil and the blood of a sheep.[71] Thiemy was found guilty, in part by his own admission, of *sortilège* and banished from his parish for five years. Beyond the judge's characterization of the materials as diabolical, there was no mention of the devil, the sabbat, or other elite supernatural concerns. Thiemy recounted his *sortilège* with little apparent regard for his possible fate.

Another case in Evreux reveals a similar pattern. In July of 1657, two shepherds were accused of sorcery.[72] One of the two, Louis Fossard, apparently had some local reputation as a magic user, as the judges in Pont-de-L'Arche (Seine-Maritime) spent some time investigating his behavior. Part of the original accusations against Fossard was that he actually refused to conduct a healing; he had been contacted by a local family to help with some sick animals but refused them. The judge called fifteen other witnesses, though most ended up not saying anything particularly damning about Fossard. The judges ordered the local surgeon to check Fossard for the "devil's mark." The surgeon reported that he had found many imperfections and one was insensitive to pain. That apparently was sufficient for the local court to find him guilty. The judge

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[71] Presumably of the previously treated sheep, though it is not entirely clear in the testimony. Thiemy also volunteered the information that one can cause harm with the same "remedy" if you do not do the initial novena.

[72] Archives de Eure (ADE), 14 B 604. This dossier is some thirty-four pages long.

sentenced Fossard to return to his parish and there make a public apology before being hanged.[73]

Both of these cases involve male shepherds and also indicate that magic use was common across the Norman landscape. Thiemy and Fossard had clearly used magic in the past, both to cause harm and to heal. Fossard had refused to conduct the healing in that case, and perhaps his refusal is what doomed him. Both freely admitted their knowledge of *sortilège* to the court. Their neighbors did accuse them of using magic, but apparently only when their expectations of success had been violated. While elite elements of supernatural beliefs appeared (the search for the devil's mark, a common piece of witchcraft trial evidence), they existed alongside other unusual local beliefs.

In March of 1602, the parlement of Rouen took up the case of Jacques DeFriches and Marie Sauvage (aged 37).[74] DeFriches was a shepherd living in Montigny (Seine-Maritime), a parish of Saint-Marcel. Sauvage lived in the same parish and was the widow of the late Abraham Germain (called Gaston), also a shepherd. Gilles Vaillant, another shepherd of the same parish, denounced both, accusing them of causing *claveau* (sheep pox) in his flock, as well as other evils and deaths.[75] The magical process used to cause this harm involved a consecrated host. While DeFriches

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[73] The dossier may be incomplete, as the other shepherd's fate is not noted. One area of interesting further research would be to determine the backgrounds of the judges in these secondary courts. Most of the court records note their identity, though what might remain in the way of personal information about them is unclear.

[74] ADSM, 1 B 3015.

[75] Gilles made his initial accusations the previous March. However regularly the court met, that was a year's delay in hearing the case.

was quickly found guilty of the charges, the court spent some time with Sauvage, interrogating her about demons, her attendance at the sabbat, and her possible accomplices. Sauvage denied any pact with demons or going to the sabbat, but did name others she "knew" as *sorciers*. In all, she named eight others, six men and two women.[76]

While these ten people neatly reflect the gender ratio that roughly makes up the overall accused in Normandy, other peculiar notions of the supernatural in the region are also apparent. Of the seven men, it appears that five were shepherds, and one a day laborer.[77] The women's status is unknown but for Sauvage, who was the widow of a shepherd. Thus, eight of the ten accused had connections to shepherds. The misuse of the consecrated host is a common feature of the region, though its use was not detailed.[78] The secondary court found DeFriches and Sauvage guilty of "retaining the communion and abusing the sacred host to work evil and give the sickness of *claveau* to the flock of Gilles Valiant." One each of the other men and women were also found guilty of *sortilège*.[79] The remaining six were found not guilty and released.

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[76] Pierre Gaubier, Jaeques de Saint Gilles, Thomas Beausousin, Thomas LeClere, Pierre Bouriquet, Jean Lucas, Marie Lenoir, and Marie Terrier

[77] The occupation of the last man, Jean Lucas, is not part of the dossier.

[78] Generally, the person is simply aecused of stealing the host from the mass to use in his *sortilège* or *sorcellerie*.

[79] The punishment is typieal of the seeondary eourts. For reparation of the sacrilege and *maléfice*, the condemned were ordered to make public apologies at the gate of the local chureh, wearing only their chemise, and to march to another public place, where they were to be hanged until dead and their bodies burnt to ashes. On appeal, the parlement of Rouen upheld DeFriches and Sauvage's eonvictions, but commuted that of the other two to banishment.

These cases illustrate two fundamental points about the supernatural, both in Normandy and in the broader cultural context. First, the "targeting" of shepherds and priests does not fit the "socially marginal" figures so important to the work of Thomas and Briggs. While other social dynamics and power relationships might explain the labeling of these groups as magic users, their marginality is not one of them. Economically, as noted earlier, shepherds were often among the more successful and mobile of the French peasantry. Priests formed one of the crucial social positions in rural society.

The second point is that elite and popular ideas about the supernatural coexisted in the region. The cases of Thiemy and Fossard show a dominance of popular beliefs over elite ideas, as well as the normality of magic in the lives of Norman villagers. The centrality of potions and prayers is clearly a popular blending of belief systems. The use of the consecrated host, a common feature of some of the Norman cases, similarly indicates the melding of concepts of power: the Catholic Church's dogma concerning the sacrality of the host became, apparently, beliefs about its supernatural abilities in the minds of Norman villagers.

The cases of DeFriches and Sauvage indicate a dominance of elite ideas, though the judge's investigation into possible pacts and attendance at the sabbat (rather than the testimony of the shepherds) reveals the elite concerns. The initial accusations against DeFriches and Sauvage focused on their use of the host to work magic rather than on diabolical claims. However, the interest shown by the judges in their cases indicate the linking, in the elite mind, of certain magic and heresy. Given the violence inherent in the Norman experience of the Wars of Religion and the powerful desire of

the Counter-Reformation church to reestablish tight control over disputed areas, the focus on the misuse of the host is not surprising. However, the shepherds' belief that power lay within that object, the host, removes it outside of ideas of heresy for them. While the Church may have been extra-diligent in the areas of local belief that touched on Catholic dogma, the main source of the beliefs (and the cases themselves) lay within the popular sphere. In all of the cases, local beliefs intruded into and colored the definition of the supernatural. For early modern popular supernatural beliefs, magic was inherently local and conditioned more by that reality than perhaps by elite paradigms.

This predominance of local belief is epitomized in the case that opened this chapter. Pierre Lasnel was a shepherd accused of causing harm to various animals (sheep and horses) within the area of Fréauville. As was typical in these cases at this time, Lasnel was held prisoner during the investigation.[80] As sometimes happens in the dossiers, a brief description of the accused opened Lasnel's initial interrogation: "a man of middle stature, having light brown hair, a beard which has started turning white, wearing a pullover over a shirt and an old doublet."

The judge began by asking Lasnel if he was the person who ensorcelled (*ensorcelé*) the animals of Sir Daumpiere. Lasnel denied that he did so but recounted that about a week prior to these events, he saw Cailly, called Rothozin, near the house

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[80] ADSM, 1B 3336. The norm, in most cases involving magic in France of the 1600s, was to have anyone accused of *sorcellerie* interrogated as soon as possible after his or her arrest. Some commentators argue that this "speed" was based on a belief that the devil might aid the accused. See, for instance, Eduard Gosselin, "Les pettis sorciers du XVIIth Siecle et la torture avant c'execution," *Revue de la Normandy* 4 (1865): 80-104. However, torture was rarely used during these initial phases.

of Sir Daumpiere. Cailly raised and lowered his arms, with throwing motions, and something was tossed on the top of Daumpiere's walls, then Cailly's arms fell. Lasnel went to the *marechal*, Devillers, to tell him about this. While Lasnel admitted to being called to Daumpiere's home to examine the sick animals, he stated that he noted only that two of the horses and two sheep were sick. He tried to cure all of them at the request of Daumpiere, using the "the powder of toads" (*la poudre de crapaud*). The judge spent some time over these details before moving on.

The judge then demanded of Lasnel: "Have you never been to the sabbat?" Lasnel immediately confessed that that he had been to the sabbat one time but without knowing where he was going.[81] Lasnel stated that there was a shepherd who one day brought his flock near Lasnel's. The shepherd came to Lasnel and asked him to accompany him to a "nice event" ("*belles choses*"). Lasnel agreed and they went to the wood of the Baron of Bosegeffoy.[82] When they arrived, there had gathered a company of people, both men and women, who danced under the direction of a man dressed in black ("*vetu de noir*"). Lasnel testified that there were a large quantity of lamps and candles to light the dancing, and that there were strangers of all sorts. At some point, the candles and lights were extinguished by a spell that caused Lasnel to grow afraid. He

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[81] The dossier shifts frequently between the present and the past tense and use of the first- and third-persons. I have tried to standardize the text to make the narrative more easily read.

[82] I have not been able to locate any map or reference to Bossegefoy, and so I assume it is a family name and in the same locale as Fréauville.

ended his testimony about this event stating that he was returned in an instant to his flock and never went again.

The judge asked: "And you never returned again, nor were asked to by the shepherd, and never spent anytime afterwards? Was the man in black ('*l'homme noir*') not the devil or malign spirit and did he not ask you to engage in a pact? How many times did you see him again and did he not ask you to take [put?] a familiar ('*character*') into your service?" Lasnel replied that he never spoke to the "man in black." The judge asked again whether that man asked Lasnel to renounce God or to provide aid or other services to evil sorcerers. He also asked whether the "man in black" offered Lasnel the aid of powers, spells, and charms ("*prestiges, fascinations et charmes*") to work on men, animals, and crops. Lasnel replied that he never renounced God nor spoke with the devil.

The judge changed tack and asked Lasnel if he had ever used powders or "*graisses*" (literally, drippings) to work evil. The judge demanded to know if the accused believed in these "follies." Lasnel denied these beliefs and the other accusations made against him. He then accused another shepherd of his parish, Levilain, of making sorcery and casting spells. Levilain was arrested and also later interrogated.

As with Lasnel, Levilain's interrogation began with a description: "a small man, having long black hair, chestnut beard, wearing a white shirt, a canvas doublet, boots with a wool cuff and a small hat." Levilain's testimony began by him stating, unasked, that his name was Louis Levilain, his age was

forty-five, and that he was a shepherd living near Puchevin. The judge asked what religion Levilain was, and Levilain replied that he was "a Catholic, apostolic and roman, and confessed during last Easter."[83] During this part of the interrogation, Levilain volunteered that he once possessed a book of magic, by someone called Francois, but it was "seized by the Priest last Easter and burnt." Levilain described the book as a "book of remedies."

The judge moved on and asked the shepherd if he cured sick animals with sorcery. Levilain answered yes. The judge continued, asking if he knew when the beasts were ensorcelled and which remedy to use? As is the case in much of his testimony, Levilain answered the question with rich detail, saying that he "watched the animal's movements and actions; sometimes how they move their feet, sometimes other things and if they are not eating." The remedy he usually composed contained many things: salt, pepper, sometimes sugar, white wine or muscadet, but while "there were many healings ('*geuri*'), there are many ingredients but sometimes it is too late [sic]." Levilain added that these healings were done through spirit ("*espirit*").[84]

The judge continued in his search for evidence, asking through what manner the beasts were ensorcelled. Levilain responded, "through the spirit, which is through the

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[83] In the margin, there is a note that during this interrogation, Levilain is "composing" Our Fathers on a white set of rosary beads, without a cross. This "fact" was so peculiar that the clerk notes it in the margin. That absence may indicate that Levilain was Protestant, though the judge certainly was not.

[84] Levilain also added at this point in his testimony that there was a Jacques Rouselet, of Restencourt, who also healed cows with various remedies. Note that Levilain, unlike Lasnel, did not accuse Rouselet of working magic or *sortilège,* but of healing animals.

grace of God." The judge then asked if Levilain had harmed the animals of Sir Daumpiere," to which Levilain replied: "No. I am not a *sorcier* but a *devin*, and *devins* do not cause harm." He added that "with the Virgin who gives this grace [to heal], I never make evil ('Non, que la Vierge lui a fait cette grace, qu'il n'a jamais fait de mal')." The judge seemingly ignored these answers and demanded if the accused heard or spoke to spirits and had a pact with the devil. Levilain denied making such a pact or having been to a sabbat, adding "my spirit is with God." The judge then directly asked: "Do you have the mark of the devil?" Levilain answered simply, "No."

Here the exchange between the representative of the elite and the agent of the popular begins to break down. The judge tried a different tack initially, asking if the shepherd believed the testimony of the witnesses against him. Levilain answered that he "would not damn them for the good of the world." The judge continued inquiring if Levilain had a reputation of being a *sorcier* or *désensorceluer* (literally, an un-ensorcellor). Levilain continued to assert his innocence, stating that he was neither one nor the other. Perhaps it was Levilain's composure or his stubbornness, but the judge lost his patience at this point and ranted:

> You have a reputation of being a "grand *sorcier*." You deceive the people who employ you, faining healing animals, and all you do is the opposite. You take the money of the people; you make pacts with the devil and have been to many Sabbats, where you receive remedies and methods to ensorcelle people and animals. You went five days ago to Fréauville to confer with Lasnel about sorcery.

Levilain answered that he had not met Lasnel once.[85] Continuing, the shepherd asserted that he had never caused someone harm, nor had "he refrained, in accordance with God, from giving solace to the poor people." He ended this response with his familiar claim, "I am not a *sorcier* but a *devin*, who heals and blesses animals and does not make evil."[86]

Throughout the remainder of this interrogation, Levilain refuses to submit to any kind of characterization of his actions as "evil." He responds to questions about the sabbat, meeting the devil, and similar accusations often with a simple "no."[87]

After this interrogation of Levilain, in an interesting move, the judge ordered both Lasnel and Levilain into the courtroom together to take their testimony about the "affairs of *sorciers*." This short-lived strategy disintegrated as Lasnel and Levilain, who apparently had a long history, began screaming at each other and yelling more and more accusations against the other. After a short period, during which the judge was

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[85] This claim seems patently untrue as the later proceedings make clear. Perhaps Levilain meant only he had not met Lasnel in the previous week or so.

[86] After this point in his testimony, Levilain did get himself into trouble. The judge had continued, asking if he looked after his flock "through the force of certain ceremonies and diabolical methods." Levilain responded that he guarded his flocks "through the force of his dogs," then added, "and I shift them all day," and ended that he commended his flock "only to God and the good Virgin; if they employ several persons, it's through his spirit." The mention of these "persons" grabbed the judge's attention, and he tried to get Levilain to admit that these persons, whom Levilain described as spirits, might be the devil or his agents. Levilain staunchly refused to agree with the judge, arguing that it was a "good spirit," intervening through the grace of God and the Virgin. The judge seemed unconvinced (at best).

[87] The judge, as expected, ordered Levilain to be examined by the local surgeon (François Legras) for the devil's mark. Apparently, no evidence of such was found on his body.

unable to bring any order to the proceeding, both defendants were removed from court and returned to their cells. The judge made further investigation and ended up taking some twenty brief depositions, involving all four defendants.[88]

Many of these witnesses testified to similar problems with the four defendants. One, Baltemont, testified to an argument he had had with Lasnel eight days before and that afterward, he felt pain in his legs. Another, Charlotte Auborg, said there was a time when she had not wished to sell straw to Levilain, and both she and her daughter had thereafter gotten sick. Others testified to various occasions where animals were taken ill, all occurring around when one of the four accused had been in the area and frustrated by the animals' owner.[89] As Lasnel and Levilain had already done, the remaining accused did not hesitate to name other *sorciers*. The judge began to refer to Lasnel, Levilain, and the other two original defendants as "grand *sorciers*."[90] The end result of this case was that Cailly (the man mentioned in Lasnel's first testimony), Lasnel, and one other, Devillers, were all found guilty of *sorcelliere*. Lasnel was ordered hanged. Levilain was banished for life.[91]

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[88] The four were Lasnel, Levilain, Cailly (the man who threw something onto Daumpierre's walls), and the other shepherd who healed, Rouselet.

[89] One witness against Lasnel, the miller of Fréauville, testified that he had a "superb mule," which was ensorcelled and thereafter refused to walk. A missed opportunity here for a great one-liner.

[90] Four other men, all shepherds, were so accused and arrested. Their records are not part of this dossier.

[91] The punishments for Cailly and Devillers are unknown. It is doubtful that this Devillers is the same the *marechal* mentioned earlier. One item of modern jurisprudence that early modern justice lacked was written findings by the trier of fact. Such findings would allow for the determination of why Lasnel was treated differently from Levilain.

These cases are instructive as to the emerging patterns of the supernatural in Normandy in the early modern period. First, as the statistics show, the supernatural was predominately a male affair in this region (as far as witchcraft trials allow one to know). All of the cases that I have presented overwhelmingly involved men, most of them shepherds. In each of the cases, the activities of the men seem to have less to do with the "evil making" traditionally associated with witchcraft and more to do with remedying "bad" situations in everyday life. The first shepherd got into trouble for the failure of his magic to work, the second for refusing to work magic at all. All of the shepherds in these cases, except Lasnel, admitted to using magic and apparently using it regularly. Levilain expanded on that theme, claiming to be a *devin*, not some evil-doer. Lasnel appears to be a kind of "crossover," accepting elite ideas about the sabbat and the devil but refusing to admit to any wrongdoing.

In the negotiated space of a trial, magic in Normandy appears to occupy a normal, albeit powerful place in the everyday lives of the people. None of the male defendants deny their magic use; they merely deny they use it to cause *maleficia*. In a sense, the courtroom becomes a place where the ideas and practices of medicine, theology, and legality all interact. The example of Levilain is more complex as it reveals the contours of negotiated space clearly. Levilain's proclaimed status as *devin*, in his mind, makes the judge's inquiries senseless. His answers betray the gulf between elite ideas and popular ones. Magic, for Levilain, is a routine part of his daily life, productive and operating to explain and assist in that life. Levilain's magic is beyond the "good" or "bad" dichotomies of the judge; it is a tool to be used, a strategy to be employed.

What these cases also raise is the issue of "masculinity," in so far as Norman supernatural beliefs seem to link ideas of "men" with ideas about "magic." Because so much previous research in other regions reveals that women and magic were linked in the popular mind, teasing out ideas about masculinity in early modern Normandy becomes more difficult. One element that seems to be related, inferentially, among the cases is that these male magic users are not the marginal figures so commonly found in other studies. Perhaps the "power" that these men have is translated from the socio-economic realm and into the "supernatural" realm as well. The early modern idea of power, in other words, might be more fluid and transferable than our modern notions allow.[92] Given that men would be more likely to hold economic power in this time, their neighbors might easily see them as properly holding other forms of significant power as well.

This idea of mutability of power can also be seen in the cases involving priests. Norman priests form the second most common category of accused magic users. Their cases, as reflected in the size of their dossiers, are long and complex. Their essential elements are, however, quite similar. A case involving the parish priest, Father Perier, of D'Elbeuf (Evreux) in 1685 contains some forty-odd pages and has extracts of testimony from twenty witnesses.[93] Most of the accusations against the priest involve

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[92] Thus, we can easily accept that Donald Trump, for example, has a large of amount of economic power within his region, but that power has not transferred into the political realm. The amount of Trump's social power remains unclear to me. This separation of spheres of power is a modern conception. Apparently, this separation was less clear, if not non-existent, in the early modern Norman world.

[93] ADE, 1 B 5605. This dossier also contains two of the most interesting pieces of archival material I found: what appears to be a Catholic Church "from letter" on heresy

the misuse of the sacred host to work magic, along with several uses that were evil in nature, harming animals and people. These acts were considered serious enough for the archbishop to hold an inquiry that lasted almost two years. The acts scared the villagers of D'Elbeuf enough so that they petitioned the archbishop to continue his investigation.[94]

William Monter has written about witchcraft in various locations around Europe, including Normandy. One of his ideas is that witchcraft is connected to ideas about heresy.[95] The Norman priest cases are an excellent example of this connection, as are the cases reflecting the concerns about misuse of the consecrated host. Along with the accusations of magic use are several that imply that Father Perier was drifting into Protestant beliefs. Contained within the dossier of the investigation of Father Perrier's activities are notations from the Register of Public Acts from the D'Elbeuf parish noting the return of sixteen parishioners to the "true faith."[96] Father Perier' *sorcellerie* implied that his parishioners were led into all manner of errors and sacrileges.[97] While the accusations of magic use form a large part of the dossier and

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and petition, signed by most of the town of D'Elbeuf, asking the archbishop of Evreux to continue his investigation into the activities of the priest.

[94] The petition is attached as Figure 3.

[95] Monter, *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland.* In this work, Monter argues that all witchcraft is tied to heresy.

[96] Each record of the sixteen refers to the Protestant faith as "*religion pretendue reformee.*" The records detail the reconversion and public profession of faith of the sixteen as well.

[97] This connection is also made, though apparently unintentionally, by Mandrou, when he writes of the magic of the shepherds being false and sacrilegious. Mandrou, *Possesion et Sorcellerie*, 499-501.

testimony, the archbishop's investigation was more concerned about the heresy than the misuse of the host.

Here the mutability of power indicates that as a representative of one of the most powerful social institutions, the priest's actions in the spiritual realm became conflated with apparent powers in the material realm. Perhaps a reason for the popularity, in Normandy, for using the consecrated host as a magical aid was the idea, supported by Catholic dogma, that the host represented great religious power. One can easily imagine that some might hold that it also held great magical power. While the sheer numbers of cases involving priests is low, they do form the second largest category of known accused. Beyond confused theological ideas about the host, one explanation that ties both shepherds and priests together is that both were men with locally based power, either economic or social. Like the blending of ideas of power with the host, these men were assumed to have access to other kinds of power as well. In Normandy, to paraphrase Foucault, knowledge and power were identical.[98]

Examinations of power in history have taken on new meaning since the work of Michel Foucault.[99] In his works, Foucault writes of power not as "thing" or possession, but as a network of relationships. Power is a fluid object, acting upon and acted upon

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[98] As with the observation that Norman popular conceptions of magic were tool-like, the focus on the host reinforces that idea. The priest is not the actual source of the sought-after magic; it is a "thing," the host. The limitation of this argument is that the general principle does not explain why other socially or economically powerful groups, say the aristocracy or wealthy merchants, were not also accused. However, this does not render the explanation meaningless, merely awaiting further proof.

[99] See, for instance, Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*; Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language,* trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

by people in historically constructed periods. This notion of power as a relationship allows one to view the exchanges between Levilain and his judge as a dialogue, as an interaction of ideas. Within that dialogue, what becomes clear is that Levilain's ideas about his world are informed by the efficacy of prayers and God's ability to act concretely in the world. Levilain's life seems built upon notions, foreign to his judge, of spirits and neutral magic. The difference goes beyond the judge viewing Levilain's beliefs as merely inappropriate. He does, but as the judge struggles to fit Levilain's practices into ideas of devil worship, Levilain rejects or simply ignores the judge's attempt. While the judge seeks to impose his ideas upon Levilain, the shepherd refuses to submit. Their conversation illustrates more than a judgment about morality; it illustrates a gulf in understanding about their worlds. While the ultimate power to sentence lies in the judge's hands (Lasnel was hung and Levilain banished), before that judgment is rendered, dialogue occurs between the two.

Another case may further illustrate the gap between elite and popular understandings of magic. In a Rouen parish, a wedding reception apparently got a little out of hand.[100] Two men were arrested and convicted for *sortilège*, the casting of spells. One, a shepherd and brother of the bride, Guillaume Beuse, had performed the popular yet infamous "*a noué* [*nouer*?] *l'esguillette*" spell on his new brother-in-law.[101] He did this in public, during the wedding reception. Apparently, this was meant as some kind of joke, as a friend of Beuse (the second man arrested), a pharmacist named

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[100] ADSM, 1B 4036.

[101] This spell was a common one, a kind of impotence spell that apparently created a kind of magical noose around the procreative member of the bridegroom.

Moreau, immediately stepped from the crowd and performed the counter-spell. Both Moreau and Beuse testified that their magic use (on that occasion at least) had been in jest and a mere pretense. For their little foolishness, Beuse was sentenced to make a public apology and serve ten years in the galleys.[102] Moreau, on the other hand, got that sentence plus banishment for five years, having all his books and papers burnt in public and a fine of 150 livres.[103] Even in the context of what, by their own admission, was a simple prank, those around them took the supernatural very seriously. From Beuse's perspective, magic clearly occupied a place supremely different than it did for the judges who decided his case.

Shepherds, Always the Shepherds . . .

French writers have noticed the preponderance of male shepherds in Norman witchcraft in the past. Amable Floquet, in his seven-volume *Histoire du Parlement de Normandie*, writes in the mid-nineteenth century, "Shepherds, always the shepherds! Because of their traditions, practices and recipes, the people first resort to them and then, shortly afterwards, they are challenged. The same beliefs are held to be true with priests; with their learning, and various notions of medicine, they are always suspect. And both, because of their powers to cause harm, are accused before others in

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[102] While the death sentence was given in many Norman witchcraft cases, banishment (either for a period of time or for life) and service as a rower in the galley ships of the royal navy in the Mediterranean Sea were also common forms of severe punishment used in such cases.

[103] Moreau's home (business?) was searched and several incriminating items were found. Most of them were odd bits of parchment (some blank and other covered with strange symbols), which were taken by the court to indicate other, more nefarious magical activities.

laziness."[104] Floquet makes clear in his hundred-plus page recounting of *sorcellerie* in the fifteenth though eighteenth centuries that he finds the Norman "preoccupation with the ridiculous idea of sorcery" a matter of some embarrassment.[105]

Similarly, in 1845, writing on the "traditions, legends and popular superstitions" of Normandy, Amelie Bosquet attempts to explain why shepherds are so often a target for accusations of sorcery.

> It is principally among the shepherds that the recruits and adepts of sorcery are found. The gifts of divination, of supernatural powers and of prophecy are linked to the profession of shepherd, by a connection going back to the Chaldean pasturers, and continue to be easily explained by their solitary and contemplative life. They walk their flock slowly over the hills and plains . . . and by their sagacious observations, learn the powers and connections of their world. . . . Their silent nights are not wasted but spent contemplating the lights of heaven, and so they learn the connections of the stars to the happenings their lives.[106]

Bosquet goes on to explain that, therefore, the explanation for why shepherds are so easily targeted is because of their easy knowledge of the plant, animal, and natural world, in all its mysteries. Their ability to heal animals, as well as cause them harm, is based on their own workings with their flocks and the knowledge they pick up as they "study during their meanderings."[107] Bosquet cites no sources for her depiction of the shepherd's life and knowledge, but that seems to matter little in her recounting.

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[104] Floquet, *Historie du Parlement*, 5:620, n 26.

[105] He refers to the *sorciers* as "pretend" and employs such words as "fable" to describe the belief in the powers of magic.

[106] Amelie Bosquet, *La Normandie Romanesque et Merveileuse: Traditions, Legendes et Superstitions Populaires de Cette Province* (Paris: Bertout, 1845), 284-85. What I also hope is clear is that Bosquet's recitation of the bucolic joys and wisdom of shepherds, extending backward to their Biblical heritage, is neither historical, nor, in all probability, much more than the romantic musings of a French author in the 1840s.

[107] Bosquet, *Traditions, Legendes*, 286.

Robert Mandrou also addresses the subject of shepherds.[108] In his chapter titled "False Sorcerers," Mandrou opens the section writing that "the shepherds who harm their flocks with the aid of spells and poison" form a particular kind of case within the study of local rural sorcery.[109] Even before he has reached the details of the cases, Mandrou's opinion of these "grand *sorciers*" is clear. Mandrou refers to only one set of cases from Normandy, occurring between 1692 and 1694 (dates outside of my research). And while he describes some of the accusations against the shepherds, Mandrou focuses on the poisoning of the flocks and the "sacrileges." The specifics of the testimonies of any of the parties involved are not covered. Mandrou seems more interested in his paradigm of "false" sorcery than in understanding the role that shepherds played in the everyday life of the French.[110]

While this all might explain why shepherds possess a certain level of knowledge about the natural world, neither Floquet nor Bosquet explains why, for example, other similarly placed groups (cowherds, horsemen, etc.) are not similarly accused. More importantly, why are (apparently) only Norman shepherds the focus of this kind of belief system? Apparently nowhere but in Normandy is it true that shepherds appear in large numbers as targets of witchcraft accusations. These

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[108] Mandrou, *Possesion et Sorcellerie*, 499-513. Mandrou actually writes of only two events involving shepherds, one in Brie in the late 1680s and the other in Normandy in the 1680s.

[109] Ibid., 499.

[110] Mandrou does mention in passing a "*Grand Calendrier*" of shepherds, published in 1651, that purports to reveal how shepherds work against the effects of sorcery and "the enterprises of sorcerers" to protect their animals. He gives no summary of the document (499-500).

anachronistic notions of the life of early modern shepherds do not assist in clarifying the answer to our question.

Another possible avenue for understanding why Norman shepherds are so often the focus of witchcraft accusations may lie in the local folklore. Many authors have examined local folk tales to help understand the popular conceptions of witches and magic.[111] The possibility of using this avenue for Norman witchcraft is hamstrung in that I have found no folktales involving witches who are shepherds, and have had the same lack of success in finding local stories about shepherds generally. There are works, such as Bosquet's, that examine the legends and traditions of the area, but the "folktales" recounted generally have to do with hauntings, ghosts, or specific remedies or incantations.

Because these other avenues do not seem to hold any answers, one is forced to consider the data. More specifically, why, given the historical context, are shepherds the targets of Norman witchcraft accusations? One primary observation is that the answer is not gendered. That is, shepherds are accused because of their role, not because they are male. Equally clear is the reality that no female shepherds appear in these records. There are female witches; there do not appear to be female shepherds. Thus, an explanation for "why male shepherds?" is, most likely, a search for simply "why shepherds?"

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[111] George Lyman Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England* (New York: Harvard University Press, 1929); Thomas, *Decline of Magic*; and more recent articles, for instance, Marjorie Swann, "The Politics of Fairylore in Early Modern English Literature," *Renaissance Quarterly* 53 (Summer, 2000): 449-73.

There are certain features of a shepherd's life that, as far as this period reveals itself, might give some indications of an answer. First, shepherds are mobile. As Hoffman's work on the economic history of the period shows, shepherds are a group within this vastly turbulent and difficult time that seems to maintain, if not increase, its economic prosperity. Shepherds do so, in part, based upon their ability to move their flocks, assumedly both out of harm's way and to the best markets available. This mobility, however, does mean they lead solitary lives. Obviously, Lasnel and Levilain both knew each other well and were both known within their respective communities. Their prosperity would have been visible and a source of friction with their neighbors.[112]

If we generalize the notions of other witchcraft studies to broad notions of "transgression," that visibility might take on more sinister implications. For example, English witchcraft seems to focus on older, marginalized female figures as the holders of supernatural powers. If we view targets of witchcraft as figures who—for various social reasons—represent highly charged and transgressive social exemplars, the question of "Who is a witch?" becomes one of who is most violative of social norms. In England, it appears as if, for their neighbors, solitary, single, elderly women fall into that category. In Normandy, the transgression of shepherds may be, in part, that they are too prosperous.

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[112] This is an area where future research is required. My investigations over the last few years have not revealed any sources that specifically address the lives of shepherds during this period. Knowing more about how they lived would, obviously, allow one to know more about why it was always the shepherds . . . .

Another benefit of the mobility of shepherds is that disease and famine would hold much less of a threat for them than for the settled, village-bound Norman peasant. These two social threats obviously dominate the lives of Norman (and other early modern) populations. Being somewhat separate from town life and able to move to "greener" pastures would also allow shepherds to reach areas where food was more plentiful, and sickness was less. Again, this "freedom" would have made them more "different," more transgressive in the eyes of their neighbors. Unlike English witches, Norman shepherds may have been figures of neighborly jealousies.

The other grounds for this local peculiarity are, of course, religion. One lack of the Norman dossiers is the rare notation of the religious affiliation of any of the people involved, parties or witnesses. Of the cases presented here, for example, only a marginal notation in Levilain's examination about his crossless rosary indicates any evidence of religious orientation—and that could well be wrong. However, the case of Sauvage and the number of accusations against priests seem to indicate that Catholic beliefs played a large role in shaping the Norman supernatural landscape. And while the idea that, perhaps, Norman shepherds were generally Protestant (and therefore more likely to be accused by their Catholic neighbors) is tempting, there is insufficient data to make that idea more than an intriguing (inspired?) guess.

The other reality that the Norman data present is the dramatic spike in numbers around 1600–20. I have argued that my research shows that there are two significant general features to early modern supernatural beliefs illustrated by witchcraft cases. First, contrary to Ginzburg, who argues that popular beliefs were pretty much uniform

across Europe, supernatural beliefs are inherently local.[113] Second, witchcraft accusations are built upon a broader supernatural basis than responding to social stress.[114] The first general observation, thus, is that there must be local, broadly based tensions during that period that will explain this rise. One such area of tension that seems not to have played a role is religion. The Edict of Nantes was proclaimed in 1598, and while it was a half-measure for both Protestants and Catholics, it did bring peace to the realm.[115] That peace was built on a kind of toleration that allowed for Huguenots to practice their faith without fear of direct violence, among other privileges, during the reign of Henry IV and beyond.[116] The assassination of Henry IV in 1610 created a holding period for a decade, and serious Counter-Reformation within the French Catholic Church seems to have begun after his death, not before.[117] Therefore, while Catholic attempts to retake the social body of France may not have played a role in the 1600–20 spike in accusations, the absence of the Wars of Religion seems to have. From the Edict of Nantes (1598) to the resumption of war in 1621, Normandy saw its greatest increase in accusations.

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[113] Ginzburg's underlying belief that there is a uniform pagan underlay to all European supernatural beliefs is expressed most clearly in *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath* (New York: Pantheon, 1991), passim.

[114] This argument, while not specifically contrary to, does take exception with the work of Thomas, *Decline of Magic,* and others following his ideas. See above.

[115] Diarmuid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History* (Penguin Books: London, 2003), 472-74; Holt, *French Wars of Religion,* 166-70.

[116] Holt, *French Wars of Religion,* 170-75.

[117] MacCulloch, *Reformation*, 475. The Wars of Religion in France began again in 1621. Holt, *French Wars of Religion*, 184.

Normans were not spared in other areas of their daily life. As I have argued above, the period of 1580–1600 was especially difficult for Normandy, with large economic downturns combining with various famines and epidemics.[118] The twenty-year period following 1600 saw a slight improvement, except for the years around 1610, which were full of epidemics, especially outbreaks of plague. One local dynamic that might explain why 1600–20 saw such a dramatic increase in accusations is the relationship between Norman fears of the plague and their inability to counter it effectively. If no other effective cure could be had, Norman villagers might, as they did for their routine illnesses, seek supernaturally based cures. If those supernatural cures were unsuccessful, the people dispensing them would be easy targets for accusations of witchcraft.

In sum, the realities of early modern Norman witchcraft beliefs are captivatingly peculiar: more men than women, more shepherds than other professions, along with a strong dose of resistance to normal ideas of witchcraft (sabbats, pacts, and the like). While the elite, as represented by the courts, are obviously interested in these matters, the local shepherds claim a different ground. Magic is normal, expected, and a force for good. Like any tool, it can be shaped to do evil, but its Norman practitioners seem unwilling to simply accept that magic is inherently wrong. What these archival narratives do reveal is the reality that local social and cultural forces shape the contours of early modern beliefs in magic much more than do widespread or shared elite ideas.

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[118] Benedict, *Rouen*, 223-26.

CHAPTER 3

"Evil and Devilish Ways": The Contours of Kentish Witchcraft

Unfolding the Map

In January of 1617, William Yoerder, a resident of the Kentish town of Bendendon, was accused before the Quarter Session court on the charge of violating 1 James c. 12, the current English statute concerning witchcraft.[1] Yoerder had allegedly gone to his parish church's graveyard, dug into a grave, and removed several bones, with the intent to use them in "evil and devilish" ways. Yoerder was charged with two felonies, the robbing of graves for bones for use in "inchantations," and for intent to cause harm using witchcraft.[2] As felonies, both carried the penalty of death by hanging. A few years later, at the Assize court in Rochester, a married woman, Ellen Tilsington, was charged with violating the same statute in that she "did feed and employ & entertaine a certaine evil and wicket spirit in the likeness of a blacke dogg wth intent & purpose" to practice "certaine evill & devilish arts called witchcrafts, Inchantmts Charmes & Sorceries."[3] In her testimony, Goodwife Tilsington admitted to various *maleficia*, all of which required a drop of her blood to initiate.[4]

Kentish witchcraft runs the gamut between these kinds of poles. Certain features of traditional English witchcraft are found in Kent. As with other areas of early

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[1] Kent Quarter Sessions, Quarter Seasonal Division (QM/SB), 1315 (1617) (Center for Kentish Studies) (hereinafter referred to as CKS).
[2] CKS, QM/SB 1315.
[3] Public Records Office (PRO). Assize Court Records for the Home Circuit, Charles I 1290, 35/78/5/60.
[4] As did the signing of her contract with the devil, granting her the power to use magic in exchange for her soul.

modern England, the vast majority of accused are women, these women often admit to *maleficia* and familiars, and they describe long associations with the devil.[5] Other features within these cases are more uniquely Kentish: the majority of women accused are married and not marginal figures, men are a consistent presence in Kentish cases, and the necessity of blood payment as a part of magical working all figure into the magical beliefs of this region in this period. As with Normandy, the experience of the supernatural (as reflected in the witchcraft cases) in Kent is a local matter.

The social geography of this Kentish supernatural world will be mapped in the same manner as Normandy. First, I review the English archival holdings, followed by a review of the early modern justice system. The impact of the legal system is clearer in Kentish witchcraft, as specific laws controlled the kinds of accusations possible against magic users. After summarizing the economic, religious, and political landscapes of the years 1560 through 1680, I quantitatively and qualitatively analyze Kentish witchcraft cases. Although much has been lost of the case dossiers in Kent, there remains enough to outline the features of this distinctive supernatural world.

The discovery of those features is based upon the archival holdings of Kent's early modern period. The archival holdings of Kentish witchcraft cases show that the English justice system required the following documents for each case: the indictments, docket entries for the case and defendant, the "information" (which would contain the testimony of the witnesses, victim[s], and defendant), along with the jury's verdict and any judicial notations. Like all other English Assize circuits, the Home

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[5] As noted by Thomas in *Decline of Magic*, however, the sabbat made a late and inconsistent appearance in English witchcraft cases. Even the compact with the devil was not a regular or "indispensable feature" (529).

Circuit[6] has seen the routine and sometimes systematic destruction of much of those case records. What remains is a rather complete collection of Home Circuit indictments and doeket entries for Kentish cases but little else. Additionally, the indictments are often incomplete and fragmentary.

The deficiencies—the loss of the vast majority of case testimony—has dramatic impact on a historian's ability to recreate the voices of the vietim(s) and defendant(s) of witeheraft cases, and therefore the associated supernatural beliefs. Most of the Kentish witehcraft dossiers are a page or two in length, unlike the Norman dossiers (which often run into the dozens of pages). Some exceptions to this general situation do exist; Kentish ecclesiastical court records contain some testimony, and the more local court— the Quarter Session Courts—also hold some larger portions of the dossiers.[7] The positive part of the Kentish archival situation is that one can positively state that these cases are most of the cases because the various court calendars are 90 percent complete.

Unlike the Freneh situation as well is the legal status of witchcraft in England. English law specifically and repeatedly addressed the "idea" of magic and barred various kinds of behavior. Over the period 1560–1680, there were two statutes that

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[6] The details of the English legal system are explained below. England divided its civil and eriminal jurisdictions into circuits. The "Home Circuit" was the one that contained Kent.

[7] The ecclesiastical courts were abolished in 1642. Witchcraft cases were rarely heard in Kent's church courts after 1580. See generally, Malcolm Gaskill, "Witchcraft in Early Modern Kent: Stereotypes and Background to Accusations" in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief*, ed. Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester, and Gareth Roberts, 267-87 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

addressed witchcraft: 5 Elizabeth I, c. 6 (1563), and 1 James I, c. 12 (1604).[8] The two laws divided illegal magic into two broad categories: conjuration and enchantments.[9] Conjuration was a felony under both laws (and therefore carried the death penalty, generally hanging). Elizabeth's law reduced the previous severity of enchantments and further divided this category into four subjects: causing another harm in person or property, intent to cause another harm in person or property, intent to find money or lost goods, and intent to provoke any person to love (or other "unlawful" purpose).[10] For each of these four subjects, the penalty for a first offense was one-year imprisonment and pillory (four times). The penalty for a second offense was death. I James I, c. 12 kept the same categories but changed the penalty for "intent to cause harm" to death for the first offense.[11]

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[8] See Appendix I for the text of these laws. A statute passed during Henry VIII's reign barring various magical acts had been repealed under Edward VI (1 Edward VI, c.12). Thus, from 1547 until the passage of Elizabeth's law in 1563, technically speaking, witchcraft was not illegal (which therefore explains why there are few case dossiers during that period in royal courts). There was a second act passed under Elizabeth, 23 Elizabeth, c.2 (1581), but that merely added the crime of using magical means to predict or affect the length of the queen's life or reign. Keith Thomas also discusses these laws (*Decline of Magic*, 525-27).

[9] By "conjuration," the laws refer to using "evil spirits" to affect persons, property, or the like. By "enchantments," the laws refer to using charms, witchcraft, and sorceries to affect persons, property, or the like.

[10] The actual phrasing of the first two categories is more complete and refers to such things as "waste", "consume," "destroy," or "impair." See Appendix I. One of the few English crimes that carried a penalty of imprisonment was witchcraft.

[11] The law also added the new felony of stealing bones (or other matter) from a grave with the intent to use them for witchcraft. See the case of William Yoerder, noted above. The likely effect of the raising of the "intent" crime to felony status is that more defendants would be charged under that portion of the law. While causing actual harm by witchcraft might be difficult to prove, evidence of intent to cause such harm need only be based on testimony: cases would devolve into battles over who said what to whom.

The legal process can be thought of having two distinct features: a substantive one and a procedural one. What commentators often miss is the important effect of the latter on the former.[12] Because procedure controls how a claim is brought, it often dictates the nature of the crime alleged. The initial step in a criminal proceeding is informal and often forgotten: some behavior, some act, must be taken. Only if that act is perceived by a neighbor or an official as "a crime" and is reported can the formal criminal process begin.[13] The initial steps of that formal process are the arrest of the accused and the filing of an indictment by either a local prosecutor or grand jury. The indictment provides sufficient authority to hold the accused in jail, pending the opening of the Assize court.[14] This document generally contains the bare allegations necessary to charge the accused under the specific statute. Once arrested, the prisoner is held until his or her trial at the upcoming Assize court.[15]

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[12] I have elsewhere analogized this relationship as the flesh and bones of the legal process, the content providing the muscle and the procedure providing the skeleton. Both make up the body of our system and should be read together. Thomas J. Rushford, *The Positive State: Island Pond and the Concept of Affirmative State Duties* (unpublished Law Review Note, Vermont Law School, 1986).

[13] Commentators remark that most crimes went unreported (i.e., that the "act" was never formally charged) or the perpetrator was never found and captured. Malcolm Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). While historians generally mark this reluctance as a social matter (i.e., that negative feelings had not percolated long enough), the reality may be that the legal system—and not society—is the more powerful cause.

[14] Thus, if you were unlucky enough to be arrested just after the closing of an Assize court, you might wait up to six months before your case was heard at the next following court. This pre-trial incarceration might be more lethal than the possible penalty of your crime. Prisons in early modern England were incredibly lethal—between 1580 and 1625, some 244 prisoners died in Kentish jails. Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities*, 112.

[15] A typical indictment, this one from 1665, reads as follows: "The Juro' for the Lord Protector of the Commonwealth, of England, Scotland and Ireland &c., upon their

For more than six hundred years, the English kingdom divided its judicial jurisdiction between six circuits.[16] Each circuit covered a few counties, and in each county there were two Assize courts. The vast majority of English legal matters (criminal and civil) were processed through the Assize courts held in these circuits.[17] The judges held court for a set number of days for each year at each county Assize location. In the Home Circuit—the Assize circuit containing Kent—the Assize courts were held at Maidstone and Rochester.[18] The Kent Assize court was generally held in Rochester during Lent (February and March) and in Maidstone during the Long

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oaths do present that Mary Allen, the younger late of Gowdherst in the said county of kent, spinster, being a common witch ang Inchantrix not having God before her eyes but being moved & seduced by the instigation of the devil the thirtith day of Novemeber in the year of o' Lord one Thousand six hundred fiftey and six att Gowdherst aforesaid in the aforesaid county did feed and employ & entertaine a certaine evil and wicket spirit in the likeness of a blacke dogg wth intent & purpose that she the saide Mary Allen the younger by the helpe & aide of said evil & wicked spirit certaine evill & devilish arts called witchcrafts, Inchantmts Charmes & Sorceries might use practise and exercise Against the forme of the Statute in this case made and provided And against the publicke peace, &c." PRO, 35:36:18 (1657).

[16] They are Home, Midland, Norfolk, Northern, Oxford, and Western. The plethora of English counties were gathered into one of those six circuits. J. H. Baker, "Criminal Courts and Procedure at Common Law 1550-1800," in *Crime in England 1550-1800*, ed. J. S. Cockburn, 15-48 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977); J. S. Cockburn, *A History of English Assizes from 1558 to 1714* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

[17] As noted previously, while ecclesiastical courts existed as well, most of these had ceased hearing felony matters (and criminal matters generally) by the late 1500s.

[18] The Home Circuit also covered the English counties of Essex, Surrey, Hertfordshire, and Sussex. Each of these counties had their Assize locations. J. S. Cockburn, ed., *Calendar of Assize Records: Home Circuit Indictments, Elizabeth I and James I* (London: Boydell Press, 1985), 1.

Vacation (July and August). Each court lasted no longer than seventeen days, regardless of the size of the docket.[19]

The indictment was then presented to a grand jury, which was empanelled to determine whether the case should be tried. The grand jury was intended to "be the very eyes and ears of the country for betraying offenses."[20] If the grand jury found that the Crown had sufficient evidence to proceed, the trial was put on the Assize calendar. The English trial was not intended to be a fair and impartial process. Rather than our modern notions of determining "truth," the goal of the early modern trial was to systematically collect and present evidence upon which the guilt of the accused could be based. Reading the Assize witchcraft records reveals that the court seemed more concerned with supporting the guilt of the accused than with technical findings as to what might have "really happened."[21]

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[19] The Assize court could be (and was) closed if all business was completed more quickly. In some years, the Assize court lasted three days. Note that this structure rewarded processing cases as quickly as possible: judges were paid for the circuit, not by time. This is one of the elements that led to the implementation of plea bargaining—see *infra*.

[20] Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities*, 156.

[21] This procedural and substantive bias is important as it reveals that the testimony and evidence found within the archival sources cannot be relied upon as necessarily being "fact." For example, while it was required that the court—in its pre-trial proceedings—take testimony from the accused, the testimony was not taken under oath, and the requirement seems to have been observed more in the breach than the norm. Cockburn, *Calendar of Assize Records*, 106-7. While the Kent Assize records also show that many accused of witchcraft were found not guilty, this may be due more to the system of plea bargaining described below.

Once examined, suspects would either be bailed[22] or bound over until their trial. The pre-trial procedures also required that the accuser(s) and witnesses be examined and their testimony recorded for trial purposes.[23] Anyone claiming knowledge of the event could be examined. Once the pre-trial process had collected all the relevant evidence, this collection of material was held pending trail. The trial itself, however, was merely a presentation of this pre-trial evidence, both testimonial and documentary. While presented to a "jury of one's peers," the realities of the trial process overwhelmed whatever fairness a jury was intended to provide. First, the trial judge controlled the manner and timing of evidentiary presentations and the order of the cases themselves.[24] Thus, lawyers were not an integral (or necessary) part of the trial process.[25]

The impact of busy dockets and judicial bias towards quick processing all pointed towards the emergence of a plea bargaining system in the early modern trial process. The records show that there was plea bargaining of an average of twelve cases per Assize session, which indicates that judges and defendants in many kinds of cases used this technique to gain respective benefits.[26] For the judge, a quick and smooth

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[22] Assuming the requisite sureties for appearance at trial—generally money—were given to the Court.

[23] Baker, *Crime and Criminal Procedure*, 30-33.

[24] Cockburn, *Calendar of Assize Records*, 109-10.

[25] In fact, lawyers seem to have rarely appeared in Assize court at all. In the cases involving witchcraft, I have not found one dossier in which a lawyer appeared for either victim or defendant.

[26] Cockburn, *Calendar of Assize Records*, 68-69.

processing of his docket and, for the defendant, a lighter punishment or finding of not guilty were equally beneficial results.[27]

The judge, in other words, operated more like a modern prosecutor than a neutral referee. At the opening of the Assize court, the judge decided the order of the pending cases. He would then empanel enough juries, drawn from the pool available at each Assize session, to hear those cases. [28] The average number of cases heard by a Kentish jury between 1580 and 1635 was about four, with some juries hearing as many as eight trials.[29] Each jury would hear multiple cases, one after the other, with no written notes. This impossible task obviously had an impact on the quality of the jury's decision, but also allowed English judges extraordinary power to control the outcome of any case. An indication, subtle or not, made by the judge as to the "proper" verdict would obviously carry great weight with a potentially lost and overworked jury. In certain Assize sessions, a judge could process thirty cases a day.[30] The average time spent on each case in some sessions was less than ten minutes.

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[27] In fact, there are many examples of people confessing to witchcraft yet receiving a verdict of not guilty. Elizabeth Kemsing confessed that she "kept and cherished" an imp and was a witch, but the charges against her were thrown out. PRO, 35/23/18 (1582).

[28] While English law formally required the calling of twelve "good and lawful men," jury duty seems to have been a "duty" most such men actively sought to avoid. Not only were juries sometimes hard to fill, but often the character of their members were not quite up to the aforementioned standard. Baker, *Criminal Courts and Procedure*, 40-42; Cockburn, *Calendar of Assize Records*, 57-61.

[29] Cockburn, *Calendar of Assize Records*, 111.

[30] Ibid., 64. Another procedural factor that impacted the outcome of the quality of trial decisions was the requirement, in murder cases, that a finding of "not guilty" be followed by the jury's providing of an alternative theory or different killer. Cockburn, *Calendar of Assize Records*, 116.

Once the case was heard and the jury's decision read, the judge decided the punishment to be given upon a finding of guilt. While the defendant had a right to appeal, this right was rarely exercised. In the Kent Assize records, only seven appeals were taken during this time frame, and none involved witchcraft. Thus, the legal process exerted a strong influence on the management of magical beliefs, especially where some kind of socially recognized punishment was sought.[31] The specifics of the statutes meant that, regardless of what the magic user might have done, he or she could only be charged with certain acts. Once the charges were leveled, the judge's procedural control allowed him wide latitude in controlling the outcome of specific cases. In combination with the social realities of Kent, the legal realities of the process determined the course of both popular and elite treatment of the region's witchcraft.[32]

Everybody knows Kent— apples, cherries, hops and women.

Charles Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers*, chapter 2.

The social geography of early modern Kent was dominated by the reality of its economic and social connections. Its proximity to London and to the European coast allowed for fluid economic and social changes to occur in the region across this one-

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[31] The legal process is one of many formal and informal dispute resolution mechanisms. Generally speaking, one accesses this process only when severe behavior is at issue or other mechanisms will not serve one's needs. Thus, a person might make witchcraft allegations not merely as an "end result," but to severely punish—as only the legal system can officially do—the target.

[32] Court records are not the only records produced by the elite about legal proceedings. Various pamphlets across England were printed to instruct the populace about the issues and facts involved in witchcraft. Thomas, *Decline of Magic*, 627, n. 27; Gibson. *Reading Witchcraft*, see pages 33*ff*, above.

hundred-fifty-year period. Kent underwent fundamental changes in both structure and scale, which presented challenges to the traditional nature of its society. Early in the sixteenth century, the Kentish economy was structured around agriculture, clothing, and the sea, with small proto-industries in arms and glass manufacturing. Each of these elements was to change over the course of the seventeenth century. Such change also brought Kent unusual wealth, productivity, and population.

Kent contained five distinct agricultural regions. Besides being a large peninsula bounded by the sea on two sides and the Thames estuary on the third, Kent agriculture flowed in five bands across the county (see map). While Kent was one of the wealthiest and most populous regions in England during this period, there were vast differences amongst the five areas. North Kent (or the North Downs) was the most prosperous belt, referred to by its contemporaries as the "garden of England." While the main products were wheat and other grains, the North Downs also saw the development of hops and fruit orchards as lucrative ventures.[33] London's demand for grain tripled over the course of the seventeenth century, and Kent's proximity and productivity made it a natural supplier.[34]

The Romney Marsh area of Kent was peculiar. One description, based upon ancient sources, described the area as "evil in winter, grievous in summer and never

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[33] As the map indicates, the proximity of London drove the economic choices of Kentish farmers, especially as "London" proper expanded throughout this period southwesterly into Kent. Demands of the London market often determined the failure of Kentish economic ventures, such as the clothing proto-industry.

[34] Paul Brandon and Brian Short, *The South East from AD 1000* (London: Longman, 1990), 179.

good."[35] Not only did the area have an extremely low population density as compared to the rest of Kent, but its agriculture primarily involved the pasturing of sheep and cattle. The cover of perennial ryegrass made the marshland quite attractive for these purposes. Contemporaries often noted herds of three hundred or more animals.

The Weald was a poor agricultural region, with only 30 percent of its area being arable.[36] As with the Romney marshes, most of this region was used for pasturing—some 60 percent of the land was used in this manner. The Weald was home to large cattle herds. While most of the resident farmers also had small sheep flocks for their own uses, most of the pasturing here was of cattle. The South Downs, the region running along Kent's base, was home to small family farms.[37] While some crops were eventually sold at market, the basic unit of agriculture here was the family farm. The final area, the sandstone region, was a similarly poor region running between the Weald and North Downs. Because of its relatively poor soil makeup, this area held few prospects for rich agricultural production.[38]

The pattern of landholding in Kent was uncommon in England. Due to a feudal custom known as "gravelkind," land parcels were divided equally between sons upon the death of their father.[39] Thus, many Kentish farmers owned their own land. The

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[35] Ibid., 209.

[36] George Mingay, "Agriculture," in *The Economy of Kent: 1640-1914*, ed. Alan Armstrong, (Woodbridge, England: Boydell Press, 1995), 51- 84.

[37] Clark, *Provincial Society*, 4-8 (see chap. 2, n. 6).

[38] Mingay, "Agriculture," 53-55.

[39] Clark, *Provincial Society*, 7, 11-12; Mingay, "Agriculture," 56. Another "right" associated with gravelkind was that the land so passed could be sold by the holder in whatever form he wished during his lifetime, without restriction. Gravelkind also led to

largest numbers of farms in Kent in the period were less than five acres in size.[40] There were two separate effects of this legal reality. First, property in Kent was used as a liquid form of wealth; many farmers bought and sold small parcels as their finances required.[41] The second impact was that over time, these small parcels would be divided too far, the end result being—especially in this period—lots too small to support a family. One result of this Kentish peculiarity was the increasing number of men leasing land.[42] What emerges in this period is a triad that dominated Kentish agriculture for several hundred years: landlord-tenant-laborer.[43]

Early modern Kent was able to produce large amounts of surplus foodstuffs; mostly for the London market. In 1580, Kent supplied 14,500 quarters of cereals to

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the belief by Kentish farmers that they were personally free, that is, that there were no "bondsmen" in Kent. While that reality may never have been, the belief in each man's personal freedom does seem to have impacted Kentish society and politics. Clark, *Provincial Society*, 12-15.

[40] Forty-one percent of Kentish farms were less than five acres, 38 percent between five and fifty acres, and 22 percent were greater than fifty acres. Brandon and Short, *South East*, 171. The impact of the dissolution under Henry VIII was to concentrate more lands in the hands of the local gentry, who either received the former religious lands as gifts (for loyalty) or at bargain prices from the Crown sales (ibid., 134-35).

[41] Most of the land sales recorded during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were transactions by local farmers. Michael Zell, "Landholding and the Land Market in Early Modern Kent" in Zell, *Early Modern Kent*, 53 (see chap. 1, n. 140). For example, a farmer might sell one slice of land to furnish a daughter's dowry or, during a drought, to stave off minor ruin.

[42] The creation of a group of farmers who leased, rather than owned, their farms, was also occurring in Normandy, though for different reasons.

[43] Brandon and Short, *South East*, 169. The enclosure movement apparently did not have significant effects in Kent, although this seems to be because the land had already been consolidated in the hands of the local gentry far earlier, and the use of "commons" was not widespread in Kent. Brandon and Short, *South East*, 168; Zell, "Landholding," 42.

London; that number was 42,000 in 1615 and 100,000 in 1638.[44] This dynamic increase was made possible, in part, both by the expansion of arable land and introduction of new crops, and by the collecting of land into larger and more centralized plots. In other words, Kent developed commercial agriculture early in this period. Much of this commerce was performed by the local gentry (relying on lease-holders and laborers) and not by family farmers.

Agriculture was not the only occupation upon which Kent relied for its prosperity. Cloth and ironworks provided work and extra income for many people in Kent.[45] Flemish immigrants to Kent introduced cloth making in the early sixteenth century. The center of this industry lay in the Weald region of Kent (see map earlier). The parishes of Biddenden, Cranbrook, Smarden, Hawkhurst, Goudhurst, Staplehurst, Marden, and Rolvenden all contained large numbers of workers and centers of production.[46] The manufacture of broadcloth and wool, along with carding, spinning, and weaving, were all part of the cloth industry.[47] Typically, all of these latter tasks were done as piecework in the home. The "clothier" was the center of this industry, and he controlled and oversaw the various aspects of cloth production, from buying the raw wool to the selling and transportation of the finished cloth to merchants, typically in London.[48]

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[44] Joan Thirsk, "Agriculture in Kent: 1540-1640" in Zell, *Early Modern Kent*, 100-3.
[45] Glass and papermaking were also common though minor industries in the county. Brandon and Short, *South East*, 185-86.
[46] Jane Andrews, "Industries in Kent: 1500-1640" in Zell, *Early Modern Kent*, 110.
[47] Brandon and Short, *South East,* 186.
[48] Andrews, "Industries," 112.

The broadcloth industry began to decline in the 1620s as a result of both changing fashions (a desire for lighter cloth) and trade disruptions brought on by continental crises (wars, tensions between England and the Dutch). This decline meant that between 1620 and 1670, the wealth generated by the broadcloth industry—for both clothiers and workers—also disappeared. The replacement of this industry with "new draperies" meant a shift in production and in wealth.[49] Protestant immigrants from the Netherlands were allowed to settle in Sandwich, Maidstone, and Canterbury, bringing with them the knowledge and technology to produce these draperies.[50] These new drapery centers replaced the Wealden areas in the production of textiles in Kent, requiring both a more focused, industry-like production and various independent crafts to complete its production.

Another industry that saw drastic changes in fortune was Kentish arms manufacturing. French immigrants built the first blast furnace in 1496, near Cranbrook.[51] Kent became one of the three principal foundries for the Crown over the following decades. Henry VIII's wars and the following wars with Spain drove the

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[49] "Draperies" in this context meant flannel, bays, and jersey—lightweight cloths that were first introduced into Flemish areas in the early sixteenth century. The term also referred to lace and silk, and "mixed stuff" (wool-silk blends) production as well. Andrews, "Industries," 117.

[50] The first immigrant families were "allowed" to settle in 1561, with further waves coming over in 1567 and 1574. They came from both northern France and French-speaking Flemish areas. Andrews, "Industries," 116. By 1574, these "stranger communities" (as they were referred to) numbered half the population of Sandwich—2,400 people. Clark, *Provincial Society*, 100; Jacqueline Bower, "Kent Towns: 1540-1640" in Zell, *Early Modern Kent*, 164-65. This pattern was repeated in Canterbury. Andrews, "Industries," 119. Most of these immigrants were not rich burghers but poor farming/textile worker families (ibid., 116).

[51] Andrews, "Industries," 125.

demand for a native armament industry.[52] Like the later new drapcries industry, ironworks demanded a high level of capital and focused work to be successful. Geographically, the centers of production were in Tonbridge and in the border areas near Sussex.[53] Workers generally lived nearby and also worked as farmers during times of low demand. While a small industry, ironworking was lucrative and generally operated by master ironsmiths, who oversaw the entire production operation. These ironworking centers required two natural resources: water and wood (for charcoal). The rights to those resources were generally held by local landowners, who leased the use-rights to the master ironsmiths.[54] The ironworking industry in Kent began to die out in the mid-1640s, when coal replaced charcoal as the fuel for iron furnaces.

One of the interesting features of Kentish life in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was the decline of urban areas over the period. No Kent town had a population over 10,000 during the 1500s, and the population of its principal center, Canterbury, never exceeded 6,000 during this period.[55] Overall, most of the towns in Kent saw declining populations, mostly due to epidemics and economics, until 1600. Epidemics, such as the plague in the early 1560s and influenza in the 1550s, contributed to the shifting economic features of the Kentish landscape to keep town life

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[52] Brandon and Short, *South East*, 229-30.
[53] Andrews, "Industries," 125.
[54] Ibid., 126.
[55] Bower, "Kent Towns," 141-45

small in numbers. The following towns were both the centers of Kentish urban life during the period as well active market towns:[56]

Name (Population-1600)	**Name** (Population-1600)	**Name** (Population-1600)	**Name** (Population-1600)
Canterbury (6,000)	Rochester (1,600)	Folkestone (925)	Wye (350)
Sandwhich (4,000)	Cranbrook (1,500)	Faversham (?)	Appeldore (300)
Deptford (3,000)	Dartford (1,500)	Ashford (900)	Lenham (300)
Maidstone (3,000)	Tonbridge (1,500)	New Romney (800)	Wrotham (275)
Dover (3,000)	Sevenoaks (1,200)	Hythe (600)	
Gravesend (2,000)	Tenderden (950)	Malling (375)	

Table 2.1 Populations of Major Kent Towns in 1600

The mortality in towns was high, especially in epidemic times. Furthermore, because town life was directly dependent on the countryside immediately surrounding it, poor harvests or famine in the countryside could lead to severe loss of life within the towns. Poor harvests were recorded in 1557–59, 1586–88, 1596–98, 1603, the 1620s,

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[56] This list is drawn from Clark, *Provincial Society*, and Bower, "Kent Towns." It is based upon both contemporary and later works and does not include a few smaller towns with populations less than 275: Elham, Milton, Smarden, St. Mary Cray. Bower, "Kent Towns," 143, 146; Brandon and Short, *South East*, 152-57.

and in 1638.[57] All of these harvests led to dramatic decreases in town populations across Kent. For example, Maidstone had a population of 2,300 in the 1540s, but this had fallen to 2,000 (a drop of 15 percent) a few years later.[58] The two main sources of epidemics were plague and influenza, and they were particularly lethal during the 1620s. High epidemic years were also noted in 1578, 1593, 1603–04, 1631, 1610, 1636, and 1638. These stresses on the towns' environment added to their lack of growth, relative to other areas in England.[59]

When the population of these areas did recover, that growth was mainly due to in-migration rather than native population increases. Both foreign immigrants and local migrations replaced town populations throughout the period. Not all of this growth was positive, as many of the local immigrants were beggars, squatters, or vagrants.[60] Town poor rates and funds were often strained by this in-migration, and local officials were also concerned about the threat these kinds of people presented to a town's health and security. Maidstone, for example, passed laws requiring both watches on the town gates as well as mayoral allowances for any prospective employee entering the town.[61] "Stranger communities" presented less of a health threat, but they were also regulated and their entry restricted. This population was volatile in numbers; immigrants often

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[57] Clark, *Provincial Society*, passim.

[58] Bower, "Kent Towns," 150.

[59] Kent's easy connection to the continent also meant that various epidemics from there were passed into the port populations and thence to other areas of Kent (and London). The first appearance of many diseases was often in Sandwich, Dover, Canterbury, and the other coastal areas.

[60] Bower, "Kent Towns," 161.

[61] Ibid.

fled home during bad times and returned when some measure of normalcy was reestablished.[62]

Religious change was another area of vast and fundamental change for Kent during this period. The coming of Protestantism and the resultant Puritan movement, along with its political expression in the Civil War period (1642-1659), greatly affected Kentish society. While much of English Reformation history is being reexamined, one facet seems to be stable: the Protestant Reformation happened early, quickly, and with popular support in Kent.[63] The factors behind that reality need not be explained, but the impacts of this dramatic switch do. Kent had early experience with "heresy," as Lollardy was very popular throughout the region in the years preceding the Reformation.[64] Even though the earliest exposure to Luther's teachings came in the 1520s, active Protestant bishops held the sees of Canterbury and Rochester from the early 1530s onward. Ecclesiastical visitation records make clear that local beliefs and worship had strayed from Catholic teachings in many important areas, such as saints' lives, church images, and attitudes towards local priests.[65] These changes in the faith

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[62] For example, Sandwich saw a roughly 2,000-person immigration during the 1570s, when its population reached a total of 4,000 persons, but that total dropped to 3,000 in the 1580s as the Flemish returned home. Brandon and Short, *South East*, 169; Bower, "Kent Towns," 164-65.

[63] Clark, *Provincial Society*, 30-31.

[64] "Lollardy" is the English popular name for the heretical teachings of John Wycliff, which were introduced into Kent in the fifteenth century. Clark, *Provincial Society*, 31. The parishes that were centers of Lollard belief in Kent were Maidstone, Ashford, and the smaller parishes between Cranbrook and Tenterden. Michael Zell, "The Establishment of a Protestant Church" in *Early Modern Kent*, 21-17, 234-35.

[65] Brandon and Short, *South East*, 133-45; Clark, *Provincial Society*, 149-56. While these visitation records reveal some serious attempts to sway the locals back to the "true faith," some of the accusations border on the ridiculous. Alice Fehary was called

and practices at the popular level must have been a force for some unsettling in each parish across Kent.

But progress was not even across the Kentish landscape. While Tenterden, Maidstone, and the Weald remained areas of Protestant fervor throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, areas such as the North Downs remained conservative and faithful to their Catholic heritage. Like Normandy, Kent was an area of deep religious discord, though it experienced only a few years of bloody in-fighting during the Civil War. The see-saw nature of English religious life prior to 1580—there were drastic changes in "official" beliefs in 1547, 1553, and 1558—must have made for an unsettled social life as well.

The final "event"—if such a complex process can be reduced to a single form—that dominated the Kent social landscape was the political, religious, and social crises that led to the English Civil War and Interregnum. While the Civil War's roots and unfolding are rich in detail, Charles I's reign, its ending, the Protectorate, and, finally, the restoration of the Stuart monarchy all had a direct impact upon Kent. This roughly thirty-year period, ending in 1660 with the coming of Charles II (1630-1685) to the throne, was mainly a political struggle, with ideological overtones, about the source of political authority in England. Religious beliefs played a large role in the conflict of whether the king or Parliament would rule England. For the Kentish gentry, the real issues were neither political nor ideological but economic. There were perhaps twenty to thirty families who "counted" in the Kent aristocratic scene, and their loyalties were

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into ecclesiastical court for calling her local prior a "long-nosed Scot" in 1525. Canterbury Cathedral Archives, P/9/8.

determined more by family connections and money issues rather than visions of a particular political order.[66] Because most of these families were Protestant, their religious loyalties ran counter to the Stuart plans for the Church of England.[67]

Local religious beliefs seem to have driven early resistance to both the Tudor and Stuart monarchies. Cranbrook— a center of early Protestant conversion—had vocal and radical Protestant vicars from the 1580s through 1640.[68] The church hierarchy suspended many Cranbrook ministers for preaching and practicing contrary to royal edict. In the 1580s, three ministers were suspended, one after the other, for preaching contrary to accepted doctrine.[69] The response of the local gentry was surprising: thirty-eight signed a petition on the three ministers' behalf, brought the petition to the archbishop, and thence to the queen's privy council.[70] The result of the queen's intervention was that the archbishop was forced to back down, and the Church

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[66] Zell, "Protestant Church," 284-88.

[67] During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Parliamentary elections in Kent were decided by a group of approximately 250 men, members of those families who met the economic and social requirements of both voting and holding office. Zell, "Protestant Church," 285-86. Even in local shire elections, the patronage networks of the local region dictated the outcomes. For example, Sir Francis Walsingham—Elizabeth I's privy councilor, among other things—was one of the Kentish gentry and had five cousins who held various local and royal offices through the late 1500s and the 1600s. Clark, *Provincial Society*, 150-51, 262-65. His daughter married Sir Phillip Sydney (another Kent gentry family) and later, the Earl of Essex (207-8).

[68] Eales, "Ideological Politics" in Zell, *Early Modern Kent*, 300. There were seventeen ministers suspended in all throughout Kent during the 1580s (ibid.).

[69] Ibid., 300-1.

[70] Apparently, their original meeting with the archbishop left both sides angry and in foul moods. Because some of the petitioners were related to Walsingham, their forwarding of the petition to the Privy Council was easily done. Eales, "Ideological Politics," 301-2.

accepted several of the articles of the petition.[71] Events such as these reinforced two strands of Kentish social realities: first, the region's strong Protestant beliefs and, second, the willingness of the local gentry to protect local realities over national ones, especially local religious realitics.[72]

This resistance to centralized authority continued throughout the seventeenth century, as did the suspensions for more radical Protestant preaching. When Charles I and Archbishop Laud attempted to remake the Church of England in a more conservative fashion, called Arminianism, local resistance became national.[73] While still Protestant in general outlook, Arminianism's support for a more ceremonial form of worship, its use of sacraments, and its focus on the authority of bishops all smacked of "popish-ness" to more hard-line Protestant faithful.[74] Local pressures became evcn stronger—on both the gentry and the clergy—to resist those changes.[75] When the Long

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[71] Ibid., 300, at 301.

[72] While events such as these may seem more "elite" than popular, the connection of local preaching to local beliefs has been established in other scholarship and, more importantly, local officials recognized that such events made the locals more willing to speak openly on these matters. See, for instance, P. Collinson, "Cranbook and the Fletchers: Popular and Unpopular Religion in the Kentish Weald," in *Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism*, ed. P. Collinson, 399-442 (London: Hambledon & London, 1983). Collinson recounts how a local vicar decried how a suspended minister's preaching made every man in the area "to have his hand and mouth" in the topics of religion and government (410).

[73] MacCulloch, *Reformation*, 516-24.

[74] Ibid., 519-20. MacCulloch notes three "innocent" changes by Laud and the king that aroused Protestants around England: the use of chalices and patens in the Church of England's Mass, the requirement of treating the communion table as an altar, and a ban on bringing dogs to church services (520).

[75] The three issues that caused the most anger in Kent were the altar policy (requiring a more formal and railed altar), the Book of Sports (condoning various recreational activities on the Sabbath), and attacks on stranger communities (attempting to outlaw

Parliament was convened in 1640, the first grievance presented by the Kent representative was the growing fear of "papist" tendencies within the Church.[76] During the Civil War, Kent was a source of strong Protestant resistance to the King and his supporters.

Tied to the issues of religion were issues of economics, and the local gentry had similar reactions to both Tudor and Stuart attempts to raise money from Kent. While most of the resistance, especially during Charles I's reign, focused on taxation, there were other economic impacts as well. In the 1580s and 1590s, for example, Kent paid direct and indirect taxes of approximately £107,000.[77] These payments do not include the costs of garrisoning the approximately 12,000 men who resided in Kent during the same period based on fears of invasion, nor the losse caused by the drafting 6,000 Kentish men who were sent to fight in France, Ireland and against the Spanish.[78] Stuart attempts during the 1620s and 1630s to use "benevolences"—a form of special payments to the Crown—to bypass Parliament were met with resistance in Kent in the form of preaching and slow payments.[79] The billeting of large numbers of troops in the region also drew off local resources. In the 1620s, because of the fears generated by the

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and persecute a variety of the "imported" churches). Clark, *Provincial Society*, 361-71; Eales, *Ideological Politics*, 304.

[76] MacCulloch, *Reformation*, 521-22; Eales, "Ideological Politics," 305.

[77] Clark, *Provincial Society*, 373-75

[78] Ibid., 374.

[79] In 1614, a minister who preached that he supported the benevolence but hoped such taxes would not become habitual was imprisoned. His case was not helped by the fact that he printed and circulated his sermon throughout the region. Clark, *Provincial Society*, 376-77. In 1622, sixty people from Kent—among them many of the local gentry—who refused to pay their share of the requested benevolence were summoned to the Privy Council to explain their actions. Eales, *Ideological* Politics, 310.

wars against France and Spain, some 12,000 troops were living off of Kent, 8,000 in Dover alone. These billets, while short-term, often had serious consequences for the locals. During the 1624 billeting in Dover, the army units arrived there with their pay in arrears and resorted to large-scale sheep stealing and robbery to feed themselves.[80] At the most, these indirect costs of royal policies would have impacted local populations more than payment of taxes, as they had both direct social and economic costs. At the least, they would have fed into religious resistance to perceived royal commands to change Kentish beliefs and practices.

In the end, civil war came and, beginning in 1642, brought its own devastation and disruption. Traditionally radical Protestant areas such as Cranbrook, Ashford, and the Weald enthusiastically sided with Parliamentary forces, illustrating the close connection between anti-Church of England feelings and anti-king beliefs. Other areas of Kent, more Catholic in orientation, sided with the royal forces. Of course, these relationships could be flipped—anti-royal forces were also generally more radically Puritan—but for the local population, those living their lives trying simply to survive the chaos of this twenty-year period, the question of "who" was destroying their lives (and livelihood) was surely less important than the loss of their safety itself.

Initial Features of Kentish Witchcraft

All of these features of Kentish society are played out when the specifics of witchcraft allegations are examined. The broad features of Kentish witchcraft are all the more normal-seeming, after Normandy. While certain characteristics do lie outside

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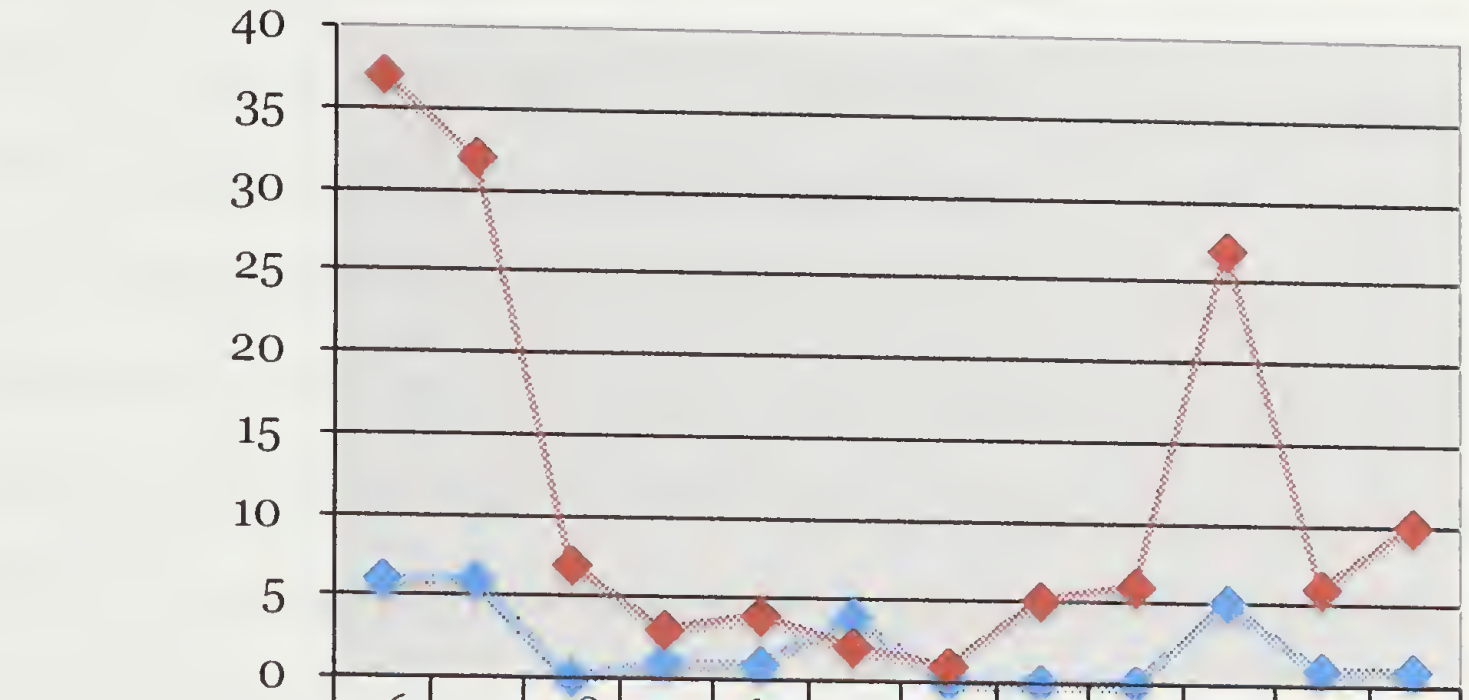
[80] Eales, *Ideological Politics*, at 307. The troops performed the same kind of "self-help" in Canterbury in 1628 and in different areas around Kent during the late 1630s, during the Scottish war (1639-1640).

the "traditional" picture as related by Keith Thomas and Alan MacFarlane, the general features of the Kentish magical practitioner are English to their core.



	1560-	1570-	1580-	1590-	1600-	1610-	1620-	1630-	1640-	1650-	1660-	1670-
Male	6	6	0	1	1	4	0	0	0	5	1	1
Female	37	32	7	3	4	2	1	5	6	27	6	10

Figure 2.2: Witchcraft Accusations in Kent: 1560-1680

Sources: Public Records Office (London); Canterbury Cathedral Archives; Center for Kent Studies; University of Kent, and secondary sources cited herein.

The total numbers for the 1560–1680 period are 166 cases, of which 25 are male and 136 female (with 5 unknowns).[81] The rough percentage of female to male cases is almost the mirror opposite to the Norman data: about 84% female to 16% male accusations. As with the Norman data, there are rough correspondences of high

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[81] The five "unknown" cases are those that cannot be deciphered because of wear, tear, or loss of notation on the archival record. All of the cases fall between 1550 and 1580. For example in one record the name "Alice" is legible but nothing else. In another, the place heading—Otterden—and the last name—Kyngsnode—are readable, but nothing else. I only included the data that were legible from their records.

numbers of accusations with periods of high social stress. The long period of 1591–1650 saw its own share of plague, famine, and war, as well as political stress. The period of the Protectorate was one of relative quiet, but contains a high number of accusations. Once again, the straightforward anthropological model does not serve to explain the expression of early modern supernatural beliefs.

Another feature of Kentish witchcraft is the two peaks of its heyday: 1560–1580 and 1650–1659. The first is during Elizabeth's reign and the second during the Protestant Interregnum (1650–1670). One explanation for the first of the two peaks is that the ecclesiastical courts heard approximately seventy cases of witchcraft in Kent from 1560 through 1575. After that date, there are no church court cases of witchcraft in Kent.[82] One explanation for the disappearance of church cases is the drive by Tudor, Stuart, and Jacobean monarchs to centralize power in their hands. Christina Larner has written persuasively on the role that witchcraft played in the development of state power in Scotland.[83] A similar process was likely occurring throughout England and in Kent. Both the Tudor and, especially, Stuart dynasties wished to centralize power in royal hands, rather than local or legislative ones. One relevant example was the passing of these civil laws against witchcraft, which made royal courts responsible for dealing with this behavior, and which therefore co-opted the field for the central authority.[84]

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[82] See earlier discussion.

[83] Larner, *Enemies of God,* 150-56. According to Larner, one of the four preconditions for a witch hunt is the rise of the Christian nation state, occurring, for example, in Scotland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Larner, *Witchcraft and Religion: The Politics of Popular Belief* (London: Blackwell, 1984).

[84] No such reason exists for the late-sixteenth-century upswing in accusations.

The sudden drop in accusations after 1580 is difficult to explain. Kent was suffering a variety of social, economic, and religious tensions, and during several of those years, life in Kent was as hard as it was going to be. Yet witchcraft almost disappears from court records. Between 1600 and 1630, there are only thirteen cases brought in Kent (less than 10 percent of the cases for over 20 percent of the period under study). The qualitative analysis of the period provides some rationale for this drop, but, though repetitive, social stress alone cannot explain the appearance (or disappearance) of witchcraft.

MacFarlane observed a similar decline in Essex witchcraft cases.[85] The number of Essex cases shows a sharp decline after the mid-seventeenth century.[86] Essex records reflect 78 indictments in the period 1600–19; 35 from 1620 to 1639; 83 from 1640 to1659; and 14 from 1660 to 1679.[87] These numbers reflect a similar though later decline in witchcraft accusations. Whatever the reasons for the Kent decline, they seemed to be operating in Essex, merely a few decades later. What might have caused the earlier decline is unclear.

English data also show that, through plague and famine, witchcraft is set at a kind of background noise level. Even when the numbers are low, there remain people being accused. In a sense, witchcraft is continually present, albeit at differing levels throughout the social fabric of Kent during this period. Interestingly, the number of

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[85] MacFarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*, 28.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid., 27-29. Over half of the eighty-three cases in the 1640–59 period occurred in 1645, during the hunt conducted by the only 'true' witch-hunter in England proper during this period, Mathew Hopkins, in Essex that year (ibid., 85).

male cases also fits this feature: in few periods are there no male cases. There is even one decade where male cases outnumber female.[88] While statistically low in numbers, men are a common feature of this supernatural landscape. Together with females, they form the constant buzz of the supernatural in Kent.

Kentish Narratives of Witchcraft

While English witchcraft is perhaps the most researched and paradigmatic of Europe's early modern iterations of early modern supernatural life, historians have only recently begun to move beyond "surprise" at the variations of European witchcraft beyond English examples. For English witchcraft, the works of Keith Thomas and Alan MacFarlane have formed the paradigm that every scholar nods to, even as he or she seeks to explain the limitations of those works. Robin Briggs's work intentionally follows Thomas and MacFarlane, even as he adds significantly to our understanding of early modern supernatural beliefs. Kentish sources reveal a similar kind of sameness and difference. While the anthropological model has its shortcomings, Kent witchcraft shows elements familiar to Thomas's work. Kentish sources also reveal unique elements as well; the high percentage of married women as accused is one of the major elements in the cases, as is the location of the accusations themselves.

Between 1560 and 1680, Kent was a county wracked by a variety of social, political, and religious changes. All of these changes do not count equally. While health and disease were common issues and severe ones for the local communities,

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[88] This decade is a bit misleading. The numbers are very low: six in total. Three of the male cases are from a single, related incident.

religion and politics were more important to the frequency of witchcraft accusations. Towns in Kent most wracked by religious conflict had a higher number of accusations.

Equally important is the importance of the legal process in determining how disputes were handled. For example, December 2, 1665, seems to have been an unusually busy night for the small Kentish town of Shadoxhurst. That night, three cows, two pigs, and a horse were all killed in two related but separate events.[89] Two neighbors, the Larkins and the Banks, apparently had a simmering feud. In the days following the events of the 2nd, the Larkins accused the Banks of burning down their barn, which resulted in the deaths of their animals.[90] The Larkins accused the Banks, specifically Goodwife Bancks, of using witchcraft to kill their animals and destroy their barn. Each case was filed and placed on the Assize court docket. In 1665, arson that killed an animal was a misdemeanor; using witchcraft to harm a person or property was a felony. Both neighbors were married, controlled their respective lands, and were moderately wealthy. These are not elements that are normally found in English witchcraft cases.[91] It seems clear that the Larkins understood the legal system (and its penalties) slightly better than their neighbors.

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[89] PRO, Kent Assize, Charles I, 35:92/16 & 35/92/17

[90] The respective indictments, while short, name the opposing party as "neighbor."

[91] The factors that are more normal in English witchcraft cases are that the woman is the target of the allegation of magic use as well as the allegation of witchcraft to explain the alleged destruction. As noted, the fact that the woman was married and not a socially marginal figure is normal in Kent.

Another case that illustrates a blending of local and national characteristics of English witchcraft is that of Nicholas Hardwyn in 1561.[92] Hardwyn, a local man and a well-known figure, was accused of causing harm to a widow's cow. Following a brief confrontation between Hardwyn and widow Lynsted, the latter's cow became sick. She attributed the cow's symptoms to Hardwyn's witchcraft. Apparently, the cow began "shaking and gnashed its teeth," and suffered from tremors and fevers. Finally, the animal's condition grew so bad that it "frothed at the mouth" and its skin "peeled off its skeleton."[93] While the graphic nature of the accusations is unique, alleged use of *maleficia* is very normal in English cases.

One case implicating a family is that of Thomas Goddard.[94] Goddard was a widower and lived in Cranbrook. His neighbors believed that he and his daughter, Alyce, were both "foul" enchanters. Cranbrook could assume the shape of any beast he desired. He kept a number of familiars to assist in his magic; a toad (which he kept in a box of "greens") and a black cat.[95] Goddard and his daughter were accused by a local butcher, Swicher, of causing the deaths of Lanckforde (a freeman) and a young woman,

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[92] PRO, 35:13: 20-21. Its not clear where the widow resides, though the Assize record names her as living in the same town as Hardwyn, that is, Kingsdown.

[93] Widow Lynsted testified that "all her neighbors" could confirm Hardwyn's reputation as a magic user and the condition (such as it was) of her cow.

[94] PRO, 35:88:104-107 (1652).

[95] More common than in the Norman cases, English supernatural beliefs routinely involved the keeping of a familiar. The familiar was believed to directly assist the magic user. In Kent, the most common forms of the familiar were cats and rats. Often, the familiars were fed on the blood of the witch. Even if these pets were seen as diabolical, the structure of the popular beliefs does shine through: the necessity of a animal "assistant" to work magic and the power of blood. This latter belief is also highlighted by the common belief that burning witches cured the witch's descendants of the blood taint of their parents.

Margey Wallis, both of whom lived in Cranbrook. The local baker and another man gave testimony to support these accusations.[96] The testimony of the various witnesses makes clear that Goddard was sought out to perform a variety of functions besides his shape-changing abilities. Witnesses claimed he was able to heal people, either by using charms or by naming the supernatural agent of their affliction. A typical function of cunning folk, this unbewitchment formed one of Goddard's more regular activities. Goddard was also consulted to find lost property and helped with animal care.[97]

Interestingly, the evidence that concerns the daughter, Alyce, came from a man, George Wheeting, a servant to the glover in town. His accusation was that he carried a picture of Alyce with him (for undisclosed reasons) and that she used this picture to make him ill, "on the brinke of death's door." Wheeting recounted how he was supposed to give Alyce a cloak but did not, and this resulted in the onset of his "affliction." Though he recovered, he also alleged that a cow of his was killed by the witchcraft of Alyce. The testimony of the witnesses does not make clear what other "vile sorceries" Alyce engaged in other than being linked to the cow's death.[98]

The various town artisans—bakers, glovers, butchers—all were involved in this case. While the occupation of Goddard is not specifically stated, he is a freeman, and this status implies a certain amount of both economic well-being and social status. His apparent abilities in many areas of magic point to at least one source of his wealth and

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[96] The baker's name was William Foster. The other man's name is undecipherable.
[97] The pertinent witchcraft statute specifically banned most of these actions. Interestingly, his shape-changing was not a criminal activity.
[98] An obviously intriguing supposition might be that Alyce and Wheeting had a more formal relationship that turned out badly, for whatever reason, and that their resulting anger created the context for these accusations.

status. Connected in the town as he was, there were occasions perhaps where his success was viewed suspiciously or enviously. The obvious tension between his daughter Alyce and George Wheeting indicates that the Goddards were a source of some kind of local antipathy.

Three Kentish women, Joane Wilford, Joan Cariden, and Jane Hott, were the defendants in a single trial held during the summer Assize in Maidstone in 1647.[99] The case originated in Faversham and was heard by the mayor of that town. These cases reflect the demonological strand of Kentish (and English) witchcraft beliefs. The first woman, Joane Wilford, confessed to her crimes and said that she had been in league with the devil for some twenty years. The devil appeared to her, made her sign her name in blood (as did he), and promised her money and power in return for her soul.[100] Joane testified that she made the pact because she wanted revenge on Thomas Letherland and Mary Woodrufe, now his wife.[101] Joane confessed to using the devil to throw Letherland out a window "so that he fell into a backside," causing another man's boat to capsize, and to cause a second one, John Mannington, "not to thrive."[102] Based on her confession, Joane was found guilty and hanged. The other two women

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[99] Though the Assize record is not complete, a contemporary pamphlet exists, *The Examination, Confession, Triall and Execution of Joane Wilford, Joan Cariden and Jane Hott* (London: J.G., 1645), 5 pages. The pamphlet fills in some of the blanks of their court records.

[100] As is common in these cases, the devil seems to have been a poor source of wealth. His promise of "wealth" was only inconsistently kept; Joane testified that she got a shilling, eight pence, and other small amounts of money over the twenty-year period.

[101] The loss of Assize records are keenly felt at these moments. The motivations of Joane's wish for revenge can only be guessed at but are probably very personal in nature.

[102] The indictments do not indicate whether any of these acts were lethal, though it seems unlikely, and there are no notations that Joane was charged with murder.

confessed to similar dealings with the devil over time; each was found guilty and hanged. What stands out in these cases is the rather weak *maleficia* that witches and the devil engaged in; none of the women caused the death of anyone nor were any animals killed. In two of the cases, the pact with the devil was made so that the woman could revenge herself upon a specific, personal target. While the need for revenge may underlie these cases, the apparent lack of power of these women to "balance the scales" is also at the heart of them.

One of the most common features of the English depositions is the devil working through a familiar and the use of a "drop of blood" as payment for the devil's assistance. In almost every case, especially after 1600, these features can be found. Even where it seems a folk remedy is being used, the devil requires blood. Kate Wilson wanted to marry one Andrew Byle, and allowed him—in an attempt to bind him to that end—to "abuse her."[103] After her abusement, Byle wanted nothing to do with Kate, and the prospect of marriage faded. She approached the devil for assistance in dealing with her unwanted pregnancy. She testified that the devil gave her a "certain herb" that she drank, and thereafter she lost the child. The devil required a drop of Kate's blood as payment.[104] While the devil is a player in these cases, these elements of popular belief are players as well.

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[103] CKS. Q/SB/2/14 (1651).

[104] Kate's revenge was complete when the devil—in return for a drop of her blood—gave her the power to kill Byle (which she did) by simply touching him. Even though she apparently got what she wanted out of her deal with the devil (and her familiar, a white cat), Kate passed the cat onto a neighbor after five or six years and said she had never used magic since. The neighbor women used the cat to kill a few animals and her husband (apparently because he was "somewhat unquiet").

The importance of popular magic and cunning folk in the day-to-day lives of Kentish villagers is similarly revealed in the case of Ellys Peerne, a married woman, living in Headcorn.[105] One of her neighbors, Newcombe, filed a complaint of witchcraft against her for allegedly killing his daughter. The brief details of his allegations are rich in content. Newcombe testified that Goodwife Peerne was a "puryfannte," and locally known as a cunning woman. Mr. Newcombe had consulted a Mother Roberts[106] because his recently born baby girl was sickly.[107] Upon her direction, he brought the child's amniotic fluid to her to determine the cause of the baby's ill health. Newcombe testified that Mother Roberts told her that Goodwife Peerne was the cause of the baby's misfortune, but that "God had laid his hand upon the child and she could not escape." Upon his return home, he found his daughter dead. Assuming that this was the source and sole event behind Newcombe's allegations, the web of supernatural ties within English village life was complex. One feature of this case, lying somewhat in the background, is the tool used to detect the bewitchment of Goodwife Peerne: the child's bodily fluid. The power of bodily fluids, as the pervasive use of blood as trigger for magic use indicates, is reinforced here.

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[105] C.C.A., x.1.3 (1563).

[106] Though the indictment in the ecclesiastical court does not mention where Mother Roberts lived, there was a widow Roberts indicted some four years later who lived a few miles away in Marden. The records do not allow for determining if this Mother Roberts was the same as the later-indicted widow.

[107] As other writers have noted, while childbirth and subsequent death were a common feature of early modern life, the event was fraught with fears and anxiety, laden with danger. Newcombe apparently felt that his child's illness must have been of supernatural origin, given the lengths he went to in order to determine its cause.

The ties that bound all the parties appear to be both local and well-known. Newcombe knew enough to consult Mother Roberts, and Goodwife Peerne was locally known for her work as a cunning person. The request for the child's "water of life" was apparently a quite normal one. While the underlying currents that led Mother Roberts to suggest Goodwife Peerne or Newcombe to seek out a supernatural solution are implied by their testimony, clearly the choice of seeking them out was seemingly normal. In sum, the supernatural was a clear thread woven in the warp and weft of early modern English lives.

The remaining bulk of the cases and the records is fairly routine in content. A woman is accused of keeping a familiar, which she has received from the devil. Using the familiar, the woman is able to visit various *maleficia* upon her neighbors. Normally, she has kept the familiar for many years and, while often accused of only one or two acts, ends up confessing to more. Generally the cases involve harm to a person or animal and normally follow on the heels of some argument or confrontation with the accuser. While other magical activities are hinted at (as in the case of Goddard), mostly the cases revolve around the behavior the statutes prohibit: harm to animals or persons, and enchantments.[108]

Magic occupied many such places in those lives. The case of William Godfrey suggests that the appearance of magical authority could grant power, even if the accused never admitted to it. Godfrey was forty-seven years old and lived in New

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[108] Interestingly, conjurations do not form the central focus of these Kentish cases. The vast majority are less concerned with summoning spirits that they are with harm to persons or property. My search of the records shows that only 4 percent of the Kent cases mention conjuration (and most of those occur prior to 1600).

Romney. He was married with two children (a boy and a girl), a husbandman by occupation.[109] After some years of brewing tensions, Godfrey was accused by several neighbors of being a witch. His reputation, as the allegations suggest, conveyed just that impression. While many of the English records do not allow for the accused's voice to come through, Godfrey's testimony remains intact.

The first witness against Godfrey was his next-door neighbor, William Clarke, who testified that two to three weeks earlier, his son and he were out doing chores on their land. Godfrey's ducks had escaped from Godfrey's land (through an adjoining fence) and wandered onto Clarke's land. Clarke's son chased them back, hitting them on the necks with a little stick. Seeing this, Godfrey's daughter, Judithe, told Clarke and his son that "they would repent of it" and be made to pay. Within days, Clarke's lambs went lame and his wife could not get butter to churn. Clarke further testified that a bull of his had died recently, and that he had began to wonder if Godfrey did not have something to do with that loss as well.

Clarke went to a cunning person, Goodwife Standen (also of New Romney),[110] who asked him if he mistrusted anyone in town. Clarke replied, Godfrey, and told of his recent misfortunes. Goodwife Standen informed Clarke that Godfrey had repeated Judith's warnings to another person living in the nearby village of Hope. Clarke's recorded testimony does not indicate that Standen actually named Godfrey as the

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[109] "Husbandman" generally referred to a farmer, though usually of some wealth. CKS, NR/J/QP/1/12 (1617). The dossier is about twelve pages in length.

[110] While the French residents of Lorraine apparently felt more comfortable seeing the *devin* down the road apiece, Kent residents seemed to access their cunning folk locally. Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 253. Goodwife Standen does not appear as an accused in any of the case records located in Kent

source of his troubles, merely that Godfrey was repeating the implied "threat" to others.[111]

John and Susan Harber, former tenants of Godfrey's, also testified. A few years earlier, the Harbers had rented Godfrey's house but wanted out of their lease, believing the house to be haunted. During their rental, Susan Harber was pregnant. Mrs. Harber testified that Godfrey's familiars ("three blacke dogges") tried to steal her newborn. On another night, Godfrey appeared—in apparition—and struck her in the back. A variety of other events made Mrs. Harber afraid to live in the house. When the lease period was up, the Harbers left, gladly. As with Clarke, Godfrey said they had "better stay or they would repent it."

A series of misfortunes followed the Harbers afterwards. Animals under their care suffered or died, they endured various physical misfortunes, and through all of them, the Harbers blamed Godfrey. Though Godfrey had only made the one "threat," that comment was enough to link him in the Harbers' minds. Various residents of New Romney—all of whom had dealings with Godfrey—also testified. In each of the cases, Godfrey (or his children) made the "you will repent"-style comments that led their neighbors to label them as witches and blame various misfortunes on them.[112] Godfrey was examined and denied everything. In fact, besides a specific denial to setting a devil loose in the Harbers' home, Godfrey merely said that he had no dealings with the devil,

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[111] The vagueness of Godfrey's (and his children's) threats is one of the intriguing parts of this case. Godfrey neither makes an outright claim of power nor a specific promise of retribution. Both of Godfrey's children became embroiled in the case and were brought to testify.

[112] One neighbor, who had been telling others that Godfrey was a witch, said he had lost a horse and pig to Godfrey's implied *maleficia.*

never used magic, and that all of the acts attributed to him were false. As to the various statements alleged to have predated all the *maleficia*, Godfrey merely said they were innocently made and he (and his children) had meant no harm. Though the grand jury found cause to continue the case, at trial Godfrey was found not guilty.

In English trials, the negotiated part of the space of the trial, especially that portion controlled by the defendant, is often inaccessible to our inquiry. While most of the blame lies with the loss of case depositions, even when the records exist, the defendants are remarkably silent. Unlike French defendants like Thiemy or Levilain, English accused normally remain very quiet when accused of witchcraft. Godfrey's denials are short and simple. However, those denials form only a portion of what we know of Godfrey's situation. He and his family were aggressive yet connected. Well-to-do but not wealthy, Godfrey would have had the challenge to maintain his precarious position in what was a declining economic and social situation in New Romney. Having one's neighbors believe that one is capable of supernatural retribution would be a form of social power. Godfrey need not possess (or even claim) magical power—a belief in his power would be the same as actually possessing it. For example, the loss of the Harbers' rent might create a severe hardship for Godfrey. Using the threat of his alleged powers to keep them renting (and paying) would be an asset, an advantage for Godfrey. Like the jokers Buese and Moreau in Rouen, the use of magic in this case was not a reflection of the reality of magic but of a different kind of power: the power to threaten. Godfrey used magic, as far as we can tell, not to "cure" or to harm but to protect his social and economic position.

A case involving only men illustrates the limitations of the English sources. William Chilles and William Lawse of Bethersden were both accused of witchcraft by the same man, Andrew Loader, a husnbandman.[113] Loader knew both Chilles and Lawse and lived close to both. Some eight or nine years prior to Loader's filing of charges, William Lawse had some corn stolen from his loft and some of his cows grew sick. Lawse visited the local cunning man, William Chilles, to determine the cause of his losses. In his later testimony, Loader claimed that while Lawse was visting Chilles, he showed Chilles a book, in English, for conjuring. The three also visited the barn of a local weaver (unnamed), who had a section of his barn that had a circle in chalk on its floor, in which Loader and Lawse stood, while Chilles made some conjuration to summon a spirit.[114] These were the basic allegations against Lawse and Chilles.

While the accusations of Loader take up almost two pages of text, the court record of Chilles' and Lawse's testimony occupy two short paragraphs. Most of that is the formulaic "who saith" phrases that precede the actual testimony. The only information that the court records of this case have from Chilles and Lawse is their denials of Loader's testimony. Lawse states "before God" that he does not remember making any spells and if he has ever done so, "it was made in merryment." Chilles simply denies doing anything Loader accuses him off. The court finds the two men not guilty of the charges. While Loader's claims may seem ridiculous or, at the least, vague

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[113] QM/SB/1306-06, 1315 (1617).

[114] Loader testified that he heard a noise, "like an oncoming horse." but saw nothing arrive. Loader's testimony also mentions that Chilles showed Lawse the seven planets (apparently in his home) and other "divers" things.

and unspecific, these three men obviously knew each other; neither of the accused fits the typical "marginal" figure common to other English witchcraft cases.

I heare of much harme done by them: they lame men and kill their cattle, yea they destroy both men and children. They say there is scarce any towne or village in all this shire, but there is one or two witches at the least in it

Gifford (1593)

One clement of the previous cases that needs to be pulled from its context is the facets of cunning folk that one can glean from these cases. While the phrase is used in only a few cases, if the kinds of behaviors that are attributed to cunning folk are used as a marker, Kentish cases hold a good store of information about these early modern magic users. One of my goals is to reveal the contours of magical beliefs at the popular level. As we have seen in the Normandy cases, where many of the defendants claim the agency to use magic, that evidence allows our window into their world to become larger and more visible. In England, our evidence from similar cases is less rich. However, many cases do refer to cunning folk. While the precise contours of their lives and work may never be known, several works beyond the archives have sought to explore these popular magic users. Ever since the work of Keith Thomas, this group of English magic users has received increased but inconsistent attention from historians. A recent work by Owen Davies, *Cunning-Folk: Popular Magic in English History* examines cunning folk over four centuries.[115]

Davies opens his work by arguing that the differences between cunning folk and other magic users are practical social ones: popular beneficial magic was handled

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[115] See chap. 1, n. 32.

solely by cunning folk.[116] "Whether it was employed to negate the effects of witchcraft, to heal ailments, detect thieves or to procure love, folk magic had no unifying theoretical or philosophical basis and there were no manuals to instruct. . . ."[117] Davies contrasts "popular" magic with "elite" magic, and "beneficial" magic with *maleficia*. Within this quarter panel of magic use, cunning folk operated successfully and comfortably. As other researchers have noted, Davies writes that few cunning folk were ever prosecuted, because "witchcraft was a threat [but] cunning folk were useful."[118] What they were useful for was "fortune telling, love, unbewitchment," finding lost property and thieves, healing, and charms for a variety of purposes.[119]

Davies's most useful addition to the analysis of popular magic is his claim that the distinction between black or white magic provides no basis for identifying cunning folk.[120] Rather, a historian should look at the person's behavior. If the magic, be it charm or incantation, was "practical," most likely he or she was a cunning person.[121]

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[116] Davies, *Cunning-Folk*, x.

[117] Ibid. Oddly, after beginning there, later in the work Davies makes much of the alleged literacy of cunning folk and the necessity that they actually read and possessed books. Davies claims "confirmation that early modern and modern cunning folk possessed books of ritual magic" (143). There is no clear evidence for this "confirmation." The evidence he relates is all from a few cases, all from after the mid-1700s.

[118] Ibid. 13. This claim ignores Davies' claim, *infra*, that the black-versus-white magic distinction was not a valid one. He offers no evidence to support this assertion.

[119] Ibid., 95-103.

[120] Ibid., x-xi.

[121] Davies "defines" practical by example; thus, the list offered above encapsulates the kind of practical magic that characterizes cunning folk magic. Davies excludes *maleficia* from practical magic. The reason for this is not entirely clear, though it appears that Davies does not believe "magic" was real and therefore, as an illusion, *maleficia* could not be practical magic. Davies, *Cunning-Folk*, 95, 98, 100. He offers

Because these folk offered "everyday solutions to everyday problems," they were left alone, if not revered, by their neighbors.[122] By looking at the problems cunning folk were called upon to solve, we can glimpse the anxiety and fears that filled the world of early modern (and for Davies, modern) England.[123] Using this distinction, even in its limited nature, allows one to go beyond moralistic definitions of the character of magic and see what early modern popular beliefs about magic were. As the Kent cases show, cunning folk knew who they were, as did their neighbors.[124]

The other work that explores the role of cunning folk in early modern magic and witchcraft is Robin Briggs' *Witches and Neighbors*. While the center of Briggs's work is on witchcraft and the role that social ills played in such accusations, he also spends considerable time examining cunning folk. Like Davies, Briggs sees cunning folk as providing "beneficial" services to their communities, acting to "identify thieves, [recover] lost property, [sell] love magic and [pursue] lost treasure."[125] In essence, cunning folk provide protective or beneficial magic. While not explicitly stated, for

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no rationale for the logical issue that under that reasoning, *all* magic must be an illusion.

[122] Ibid., 5.

[123] While the book's subtitle claims "four centuries of popular magic," Davies' best work really lies after the mid-1700s. His sources for years prior to that are almost exclusively pamphlets, books on magic (i.e., elite sources), and period plays. Davies, *Cunning-Folk* (endnotes). While he makes many claims about the reality of early modern cunning folk, he provides little evidence for those claims. For example, Davies writes that "fewer than one hundred cases against cunning folk" were brought in England between 1563 and 1736—an interesting assertion that has no basis provided for it. It is also a little difficult to take a historical work seriously that opens with a claim that the book will help those thinking of "taking up the profession of cunning folk" and ends with a proposed job listing for such folk. Davies, *Cunning-Folk*, xx, 235-36.

[124] See, for instance, the case of William Godfrey.

[125] Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 124.

Briggs, the distinction between cunning folk and witches is the black-white magic dichotomy. If "illegitimate and misused power was the key meaning of witchcraft," then cunning folk must illustrate legitimate and useful power.[126]

Briggs also notes that because magical power was ambiguous and dangerous, both witches and cunning folk could be snared if the *user* was judged unfavorably.[127] Thus, witches were imagined as "person[s] motivated by ill-will and spite who lacked the proper sense of neighbor and community."[128] Cunning folk would be their mirror image. By positioning witches and cunning folk as categories in opposition, the analysis of cunning folk becomes straightforward; those who are integrated into the community are, essentially, cunning folk. This categorization also provides the reason why few cunning folk are accused by their neighbors. Their integration insulates them from the suspicions, tensions, and anger of the people they live with.

In the Kentish world, a different kind of social geography is required to understand how cunning folk fit in the popular world. First, though temptation exists to read all of the cases of *maleficia* as "real," some caution is required. The Larkin and Godfrey examples reveal that an accusation of "evil magic" could often be made as a substitute for resolving entirely different disputes. While everyone believed in the

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[126] Ibid., 251. As noted previously, the central feature of Briggs's anthropological methodology is the "link between ill-will and misfortune" (265). When enough anxiety had developed over a sufficient period of time, some marginal figure would be located to explain and release that tension (ibid.). The reasons for women being chosen as those targets are related to their social roles and the ideology surrounding them.

[127] This statement can be read as conflicting with the previous one. However, I believe that Briggs understands that both kinds of magic user were accused by their neighbors for different kinds of magic use, but absent *maleficia*, the person was more likely the target of the accusation, not the magic.

[128] Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 23.

reality of, as Briggs states, a "world permeated by secret forces,"[129] that does not equate to every single example reflecting that belief. Furthermore, the cause-and-effect relationship between social integration and cunning folk might be reversed. That is, cunning folk might be integrated because of their magic use.

This integration is revealed in the Kent cases that provide three examples of cunning-folk activity.[130] In the Goddard case, the accused is attributed with possessing an almost complete list of cunning-folk-like powers. In the other two cases, Mother Roberts and Goodwife Stanton provide evidence that gender is no bar to cunning-folk work. In all of these cases, the ease and familiarity of their neighbors with Goddard's, Roberts's and Stanton's reputations reflect cunning folk's deep involvement in the lives of that neighborhood. Of the three, only one is accused of violating English law. Goddard's keeping of familiars as well as the allegations of *maleficia* show how our notions of the split between black and white magic are not categories perceived by popular imagination—all of Goddard's magic is improper. Magical forces permeate the Kentish world, and those forces are used. If the magic causes harm, that is evil (even if unintentional, i.e., the spell or charm goes wrong). The converse relationship also holds true. But magic begins its "life" as power, free from categorization. Goddard provides

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[129] Ibid., 321.

[130] Of the 166 cases, there are obviously more examples of cunning folk. Even the brief contents of the indictments allow for a partial identification of them, though none of the details of their work survive.

a wealth of services, all of them magically based, all associated with the work of cunning folk.[131]

The breadth of Goddard's reputation locally illustrates the importance of these people. The cases indicate that cunning folk could achieve some wealth and security from their work. While in English cases, only the occupations of men are noted, those men are often husbandmen, like Goddard and Yoerder, and therefore would have been men of some means. One can assume that female cunning folk are similarly, though perhaps not equally, comfortable. One of the similarities between Norman and Kent witchcraft is that the majority of the targets of the accusations are not marginal social figures but well-integrated ones: shepherds in Normandy, married women in Kent. Part of the explanation for both is that power, while economic or magical, is conceptually generalized; if one has authority—regardless of its source—that power also implies magical power. This implication can be made explicit by one's neighbors or by oneself, claimed as Levilain does.

Another explanation for the targeting of married women is based upon the work of Stuart Clark. In his *Thinking with Demons,* Clark argues that for early modern society, one universal paradigm was inversion; good was inverted by evil, light by dark and, of course, male by female.[132] The inverted pairs were in large part "contraries" of one another.[133] That is, ideas associated with good were opposites of ideas associated with evil. For example, the sabbat (the devil's black mass) was an inversion and the

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[131] One of the more unique features of Goddard's reputation is his ability to shape-shift. The Kent cases do not show many examples of this.
[132] Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 69-79.
[133] Ibid., 43-68.

contrary of the Christian mass. By dynamics of this paradigm, women, as inversions and contraries of men, easily became linked to other inverted ideas, witchcraft being one of them.[134] Clark mentions that marriage was also a contentious idea, in that it required the joining of the positive "male" to the negative "female." This tension might explain how married women, especially in perhaps otherwise negative relationships, might become associated with other negative ideas, witchcraft among them.

Overall, Kentish witchcraft shows mainly stark differences from its Norman counterpart. While gender and occupation are the clear and drastic aspects, the English cases also reflect a higher degree of concern for the devil and his workings—allegations of *maleficia* are common in these cases. The cases presented here also indicate that people are a more common target than animals in Kent, again, unlike Normandy. Both spaces, however, show the presence of cunning folk across their respective landscapes, and both Kent and Normandy seem to believe that magic is an ordinary tool, capable of being utilized to solve mundane, everyday problems. When these cases are mapped, however, the specific geographies show an even finer, more subtle reflection of local beliefs.

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[134] Ibid., 129.

CHAPTER 4

MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE OF NORMAN WITCHCRAFT

If historians are spatially illiterate and geographically ignorant, this will seriously affect their knowledge and understanding of the past.

Jeremy Black, *Maps and History,* 241.

Alan MacFarlane must be one of the most frequently cited but infrequently imitated historians of early modern witchcraft. His *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* continues to be cited as a leading work on English witchcraft, though the work is some thirty years old. One of the key elements of MacFarlane's work is the utilization of maps to portray the relationship involved in witchcraft accusation in Essex during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[1] Few historians have followed in MacFarlane's footsteps, and the use of maps in studying this early modern social phenomenon is rare.[2] My work on the supernatural is built, in part, upon the idea that the exceptional detail can be made to reveal deeper structures of belief, values, and systems in the early modern social world.[3] The relationship between these elements—

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[1] MacFarlane created maps that placed frequency of witchcraft accusations and time together in Essex from 1560 to 1680 (31- 41), type of accusation and time (71), and locations of cunning folk and their clients in Essex over the same period (116-119). MacFarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England.*

[2] Two of the few examples are Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, and Wolfgang Behringer, *Witchcraft Persecutions in Bavaria: Popular Magic, Religious Zealotry, and Reason of State in Early Modern Europe,* trans. J. C. Grayson and David Lederer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Briggs employs the last type of maps noted in MacFarlane's work, that of location of cunning folk. Behringer's maps are few and show occurrences, rather than relationships.

[3] Jeremy Black, *Maps and History: Constructing Images of the Past* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Black, *Maps and Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). Both of these works examine the ways maps both construct and reflect

the social and the structural—have both temporal and spatial aspects.[4] While the court records can show temporal aspects, maps illuminate these spatial aspects better than text.[5]

The social geography of Norman witchcraft is quite different from that of Kent. When these differences are placed on the landscape of Normandy, their peculiar nature stands out even more. While the number of cases prevents the same kind of individual marking that the Kent data allow, using secondary courts as the filter allows for the illumination of general trends while preserving clarity.[6] Thus, an examination of the mapping of all Norman accusations reveals that the secondary courts surrounding Rouen (Rouen, Evreux, Caudebec, Pont Au de Mer, Pont de L'Arche and Lyons la Foret) contain eighty-one cases (figures 3.2-3.3). The epicenter of Norman witchcraft

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reality, while arguing for the power geography has to explain the past. Again, the limitation of sources—court records of witchcraft cases—to explore a larger social reality—supernatural beliefs—must be noted. Witchcraft and the supernatural are not identical categories, though we use the former to explore the latter.

[4] Ginzburg, *Night Battles*. One of Ginzburg's main points in that work is the evolution of the *benandanti's* popular beliefs over time, as well as the temporally specific nature of those beliefs. The other aspect of those beliefs is their spatial uniqueness: no other records of *benandanti*-like beliefs have been found elsewhere in Europe.

[5] The power of maps to illuminate spatial relationships has only been improved upon with the advent of Geographic Information System software (GIS).

[6] The jurisdictions of the Norman secondary courts were drawn from two maps: "La royaume de France, 1724" (Library of Congress Geography and Map Division) http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?gmd:1:./temp/~ammem_7LRD and "Cette Géographie de La France par Abbé de Dangeaù" (David Rumsey Map Collection) http://www.davidrumsey.com/, various pages. I note here that William Monter found 380 cases in his search of the archives. Monter, *Toads and Eucharists*, 564. I located only 332 cases involving witchcraft. In all likelihood, the difference is based upon a lack of time in the archives. While I doubt the cases will change the general features of what follows, I do note the difference.

lies in the heartland of the region, Rouen.[7] Only one other area rivals Rouen or Evreux in numbers: Alençon (twenty-one cases). The secondary area of strong concentration is in the far west, in the region known as Cotentin.[8]

Another feature of this landscape is the relative scarcity, certainly rareness, of cases in the region of Caen. In the five secondary courts around Caen, there are only twenty-four cases. Even though Caen was a populous and wealthy area, concern with witchcraft was not one of its attributes. There are also two jurisdictions that contain no cases, Mortain and Viiledient.[9] Finally, there is a scattering of courts that saw very little interest in witchcraft—Beaumont, Orbec, Bretteville, for example. Most of these lighter areas run through the center of Normandy. Witchcraft runs throughout Normandy, but the flow is not constant.

When the layer of gender is added to this Norman landscape, an interesting change happens in the data (figures 3.5; 3.9-3.12; 3.15-3.17). Female cases are almost exclusively in the two Normandy regions of Cotentin and Alençon. The river delta around Carentan is *the* region of female witchcraft accusations in Normandy, as it is the only location where accused females vastly outnumber accused males. Alençon also sees high numbers of accused female cases, but there they merely outnumber

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[7] Rouen was the "court of last resort" within Normandy, and all appeals were taken to that court. However, the locations of the mapped cases rely on the location of the original case and not where the appeal finally landed.

[8] There are five secondary courts that make up the area of Cotentin. We shall see that gender plays a large role in the number of accusations of this area.

[9] Here is where one of the challenges of historical geography presents itself. These two courts lie along the southern boundary of Normandy and are the only two without any cases over the 120-year period. The reasons for this may lie across the boundary of Normandy (into Brittany), not within Normandy itself. "Local" often does not track political boundaries.

accused males by a slight majority. Male cases are endemic throughout Normandy, but there are also similar regional restrictions. The area around Rouen, especially to the north—the courts of Cailly, Caudebec, and Cany—show a similar concentration of male cases. Understanding why this restriction exists is much more problematic.[10] While Rouen and its environs experienced more violence and turmoil during the Wars of Religion and more regular visitations of famine and plague, there seems to be little differentiation between the two. While Cherbourg and the other coastal cities in Cotentin were smaller than Rouen, they were populous and viable trading ports, equally connected through trade to the outside world. None of those social features explains why Alençon would show similarities to Cotentin rather than to Rouen.

GIS allows for the combining of layers, and the addition of time to this gender layer shows that interest in female cases peaks by 1640 and then disappears.[11] The maps of female cases over time show that Alençon is actually more consistent in its interest in female witchcraft, with high numbers from 1560 through 1640. Male witchcraft drops off after 1640 but not as dramatically, reflecting the lessening generally of witchcraft as a social concern. Male witchcraft remains regional, with the northeastern area of Normandy dominating the male cases over time. An easy explanation for the location of the shepherd cases in northwest Normandy might be that sheep-raising was especially concentrated within that region. However, just as locating

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[10] I have not had the time to locate and digest the kind of social histories that are available for Kent and Normandy. Thus, many questions presented by these maps (why are the shepherds in the northwest of Normandy? for example) are simply not answerable at this point in my work.

[11] Only two cases of female witchcraft in Normandy exist after 1640.

the social data about the specific regions within Normandy must await further research, so too does explaining why these trends exist.

The layering of occupation, for those cases for which the work is known, is equally instructive about the geography of the supernatural in Normandy (figures 3.18–3.24). [12] For the seventeen cases that name priests as accused, Rouen, Evreux, and Caen hold half the cases.[13] Large areas, especially the more rural parts of Normandy, see no accusations against priests. Not surprisingly, each of these jurisdictions contains bishoprics and major cathedrals, and thus would be major centers of worship. These three areas are also the most chaotic and important during the religious conflict of the Wars of Religion. When we combine conviction information with priest data, the linking of religious conflict to priest accusations becomes clearer. Three jurisdictions, lying outside Rouen and Caen, that hear accusations against their priests find those priests not guilty. Caen, Evreux, and Rouen all find some of their priests guilty of practicing magic.

Shepherds, forming approximately 50 percent of the known cases, have a striking feature as well. The areas around Caen and southwestern Normandy have either few or no shepherd cases at all.[14] The western regions and Rouen hold the bulk of shepherd accusations, with the secondary courts of Rouen, Caudebec, and Cailly

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[12] A reservation must be noted in that there are eighty-four cases in which no occupation is recorded.

[13] Seventeen is not a large number of cases, especially over a 120-year period. However, within the pool of Norman witchcraft, they do form the second most numerous category for which an occupation is known. Some generalizations, therefore, can be made about their appearance.

[14] Eleven of Normandy's secondary courts see either one or no cases involving shepherds.

containing the majority of cases implicating shepherds. Those regions accusing shepherds are seemingly equally likely to convict or not convict, as the addition of conviction data does not change the rough outlines of this social geography.[15] While Alençon does not have high numbers of shepherd cases, this jurisdiction remains focused on magic use and sees a number of shepherd cases as well.

The layering of verdicts shows a slightly less powerful dynamic than in Kent (figures 3.3-3.4; 3.7-3.8; 3.13-3.14). While the ratio of not-guilty verdicts does drop off, it does not do so with the same power as in Kent. The number of not-guilty verdicts between 1628 and 1662 is 42, while guilty verdicts total 12 for the same period. The last guilty verdict in Normandy is in 1662, for the period of 1560–1680. Early verdicts show a relatively even breakdown, 19 versus 12 for the 1580–1600 and 1600-1620 periods, respectively. As the number of cases rises, the conviction rate also rises.

The geographical spread of the convictions presents no real clear pattern (see figures 3.26-3.28).[16] Cailly seems to be rather lenient in the judgments concerning magic use, with conviction rates below 25 percent overall, and for both men and women. Avranches, on the other hand, shows high rates in every category. One interesting observation is that most courts seem to have high male conviction rates and

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[15] An interesting contrast with Kent is that often the men accused in Kent are more of the "middling-sort," while in Normandy, the male cases seem to target more peasant figures. For example, there is only one case each involving a tailor, a weaver, a merchant, and a doctor.

[16] These maps are slightly misleading as certain courts had one or two cases, such as Vire and Flers, but convicted each or both of their accused. Those rates may not reflect anything about witchcraft beliefs or ideas of the supernatural.

low female ones. This suggests that the higher incidence of male-targeted witchcraft accusations generally in Normandy also means that even when women are accused, they are treated more leniently by the judges. Besides the two courts (mentioned above) that saw no witchcraft accusations, the various early modern Norman jurisdictions seem to have evaluated witchcraft allegations as they would any other crime before 1640.[17]

The first explanation for some of these features is, of course, religion. While Kent experienced a gradation of Protestant beliefs, the Wars of Religion in Normandy polarized the region into two distinct camps. The Catholic strongholds were found around Caen, the Protestant ones around Rouen. Some of the more bloody confrontations between Catholics and Protestants occurred in and around Rouen, as did the epicenter of witchcraft accusations. While this religious conflict is not quite the kind of Protestant insecurity that Keith Thomas finds common in English accusations, religious conflict does provide a paradigm that explains some of the landscape of Normandy's witchcraft beliefs. As the maps reveal, however, this explanation does not

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[17] Indeed, Alfred Soman notes that witchcraft cases in Paris for the period 1565–1640 seem to track similar conviction rates and appeals for cases of infanticide and other serious crimes. Soman, "Parlement of Paris and the Great Witch Hunt (1565-1640)," *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 9, no. 2 (1978): 34, 36. Tantalizingly, Soman notes that some of the same characteristics of witchcraft cases are found in these other cases as well. For example, sodomy and bestiality cases seemed to have been built on long-standing enmities, similar to those described by Briggs and Thomas. "The complaint which actually triggered a trial called forth a deluge of additional accusations. Ten, twenty, even fifty neighbors came forward with testimony to incidents stretching back sometimes as far as twenty or thirty years" (ibid., 44).

quite suffice in areas that were not contested so severely.[18] Nor would such an easy, single dynamic explain why areas—such as the regions of Cotentin and Alençon—saw somewhat heavy numbers of accusations.

Indeed, the complexity of Norman witchcraft is almost as mystifying as the dominance of male shepherds. What feature of the social landscape of Normandy differentiates Cotentin from, for example, Caudebec? In one place, accusations against women outnumber men; in the other, the reverse is true. Two regions lying near each secondary court—Thoriguy and Conches, respectively—see lower numbers and no such gender orientation. Certainly, the region around Rouen would have seen both more disruption and, contradictorily, more progress, than Cotentin. Socially, given the importance and connections of Rouen with the rest of France, it was a much more dynamic zone. By why would dynamism translate through gender? Why, to paraphrase Floquet, the male shepherds?

As I have argued above, witchcraft in Normandy, in its most common feature, seems to be tied into notions of power that are more "positive" than in its English counterparts. While social stress might serve to explain why the majority of English cases target marginal women, those individuals who prospered outside of the normal social order (male shepherds) serve to explain the majority of Norman cases. Another feature of Kentish witchcraft that is reversed in Normandy is the influence of foreign communities on accusations. Rouen had the most active contact with foreigners in Normandy, with many semi-permanent foreign trading communities established there.

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[18] There are also some small secondary courts around Rouen that did not see the same kind of heightened awareness of witchcraft, for example, Pont de L'Arche and Lyon-la-Forêt.

Yet Rouen saw the largest number of accusations. The difference between the two countries may be that Kent's strangers were religious (victims of persecution themselves) while Normandy's were economic (willing transplants).

Another reversal of social geography between Normandy and Kent is that the majority of witchcraft accusations in Normandy occurred in and around population centers—Rouen, Avranches, and Alençon. Many rural areas saw only one or two cases of witchcraft over the 120-year period under study. Rouen and other social centers saw five to six cases per *year* in the peak times.[19] Perhaps the extreme variations in social tides, caused by the religious, political, and economic turmoil of the period, were felt more keenly in the populated areas and were thus reflected in its expression of supernatural concerns. Another explanation might be that urban areas experienced political and economic changes more quickly than rural areas. These tides of social change were more powerful during this period, and within those tides, some segments of society—those popular figures who said "no" to that change—might have attracted the attention of elite authority figures.

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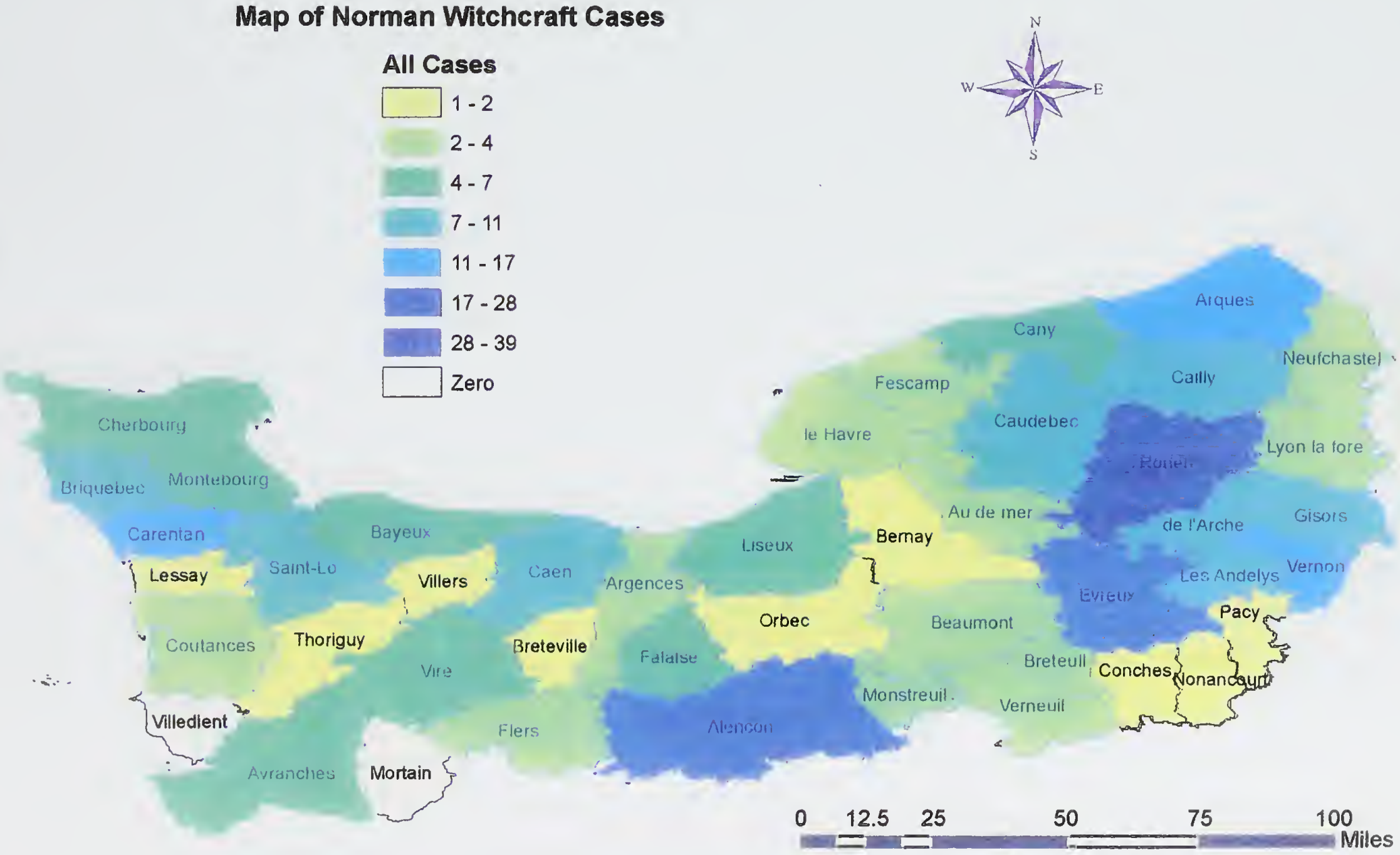
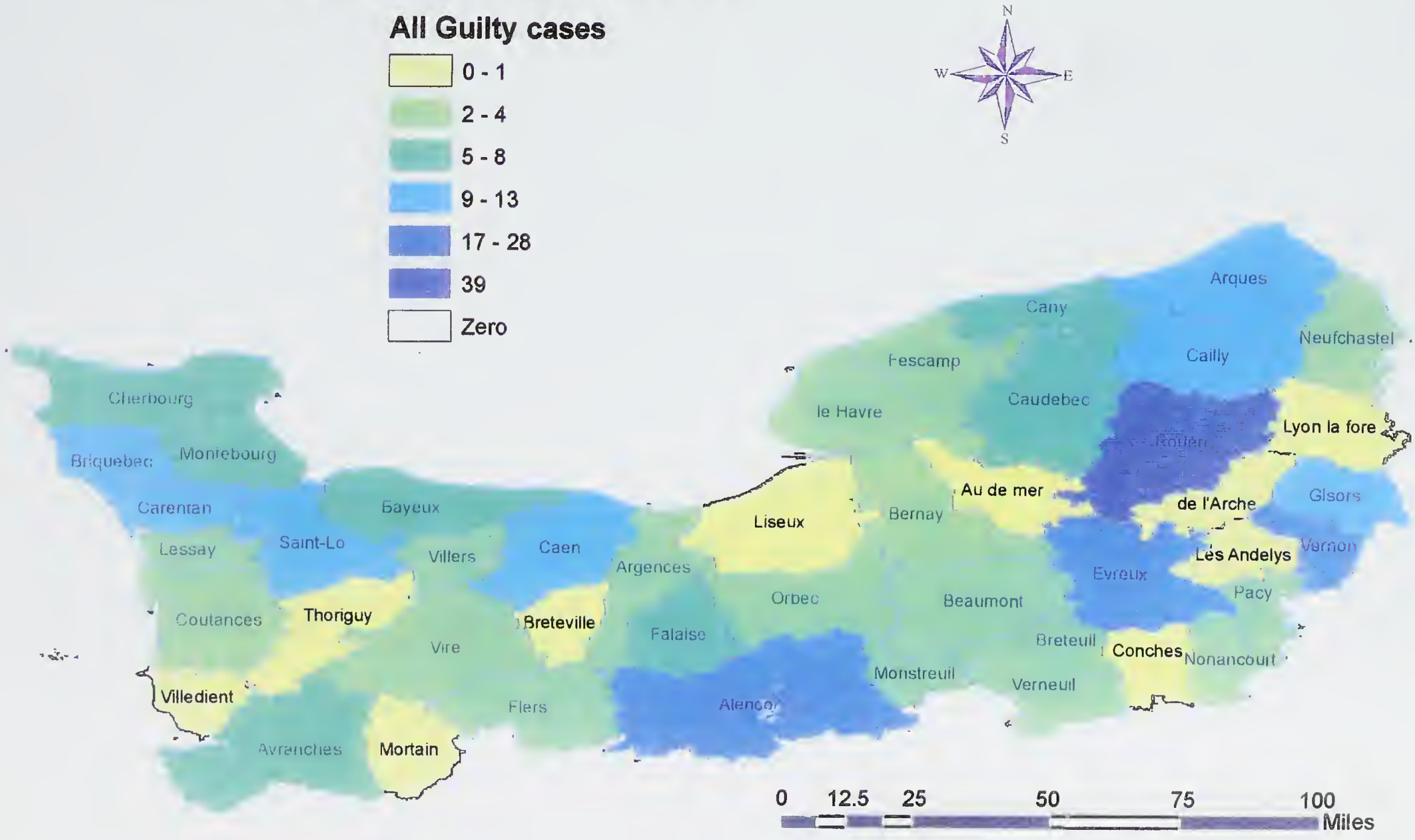
[19] The highest number of witchcraft accusations in Normandy occurs during the 1600–30 period.

Map of Kent and Normandy
(digitzed from Map of Kingdom of France 1740)

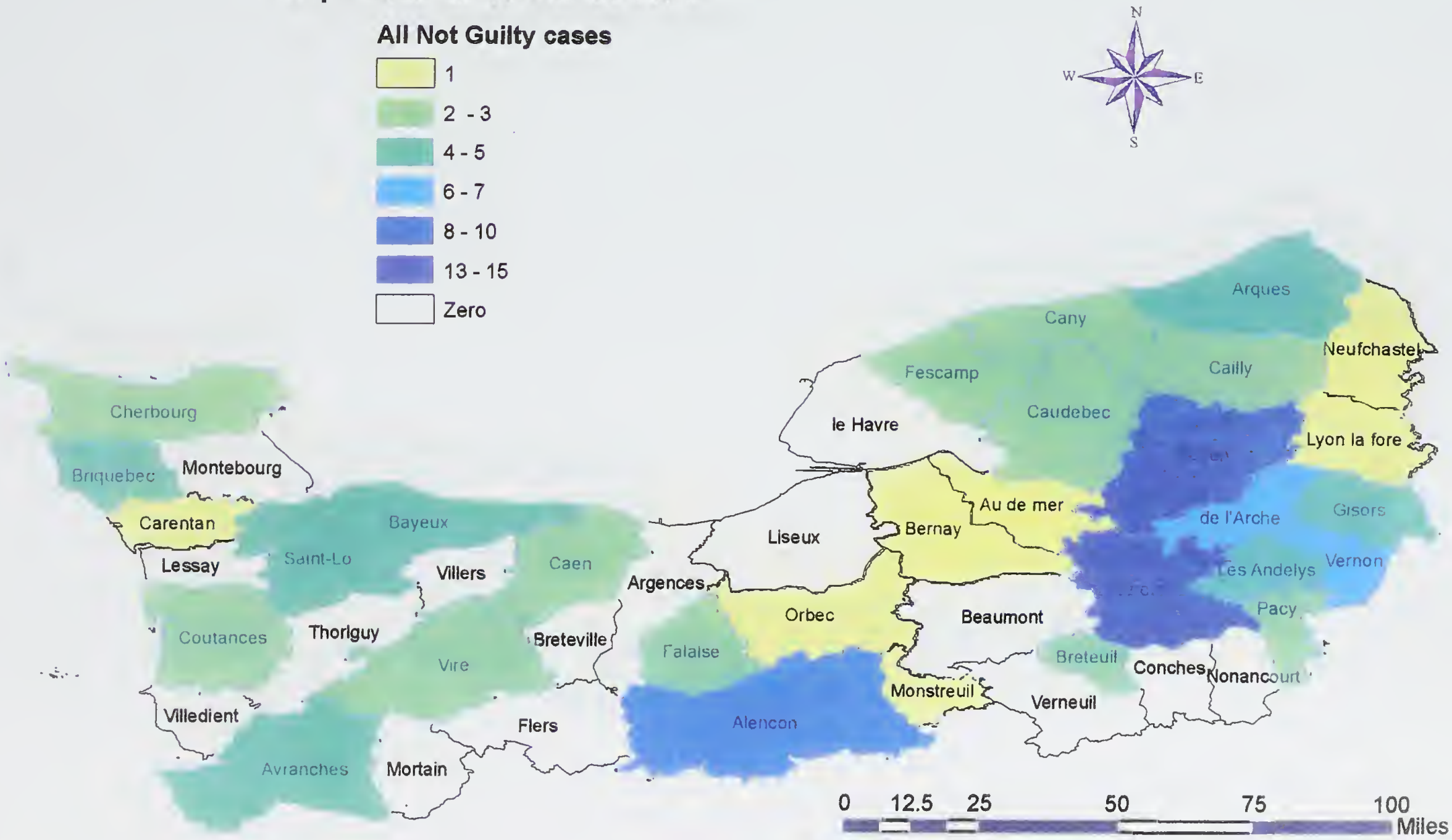
Map of Norman Witchcraft Cases



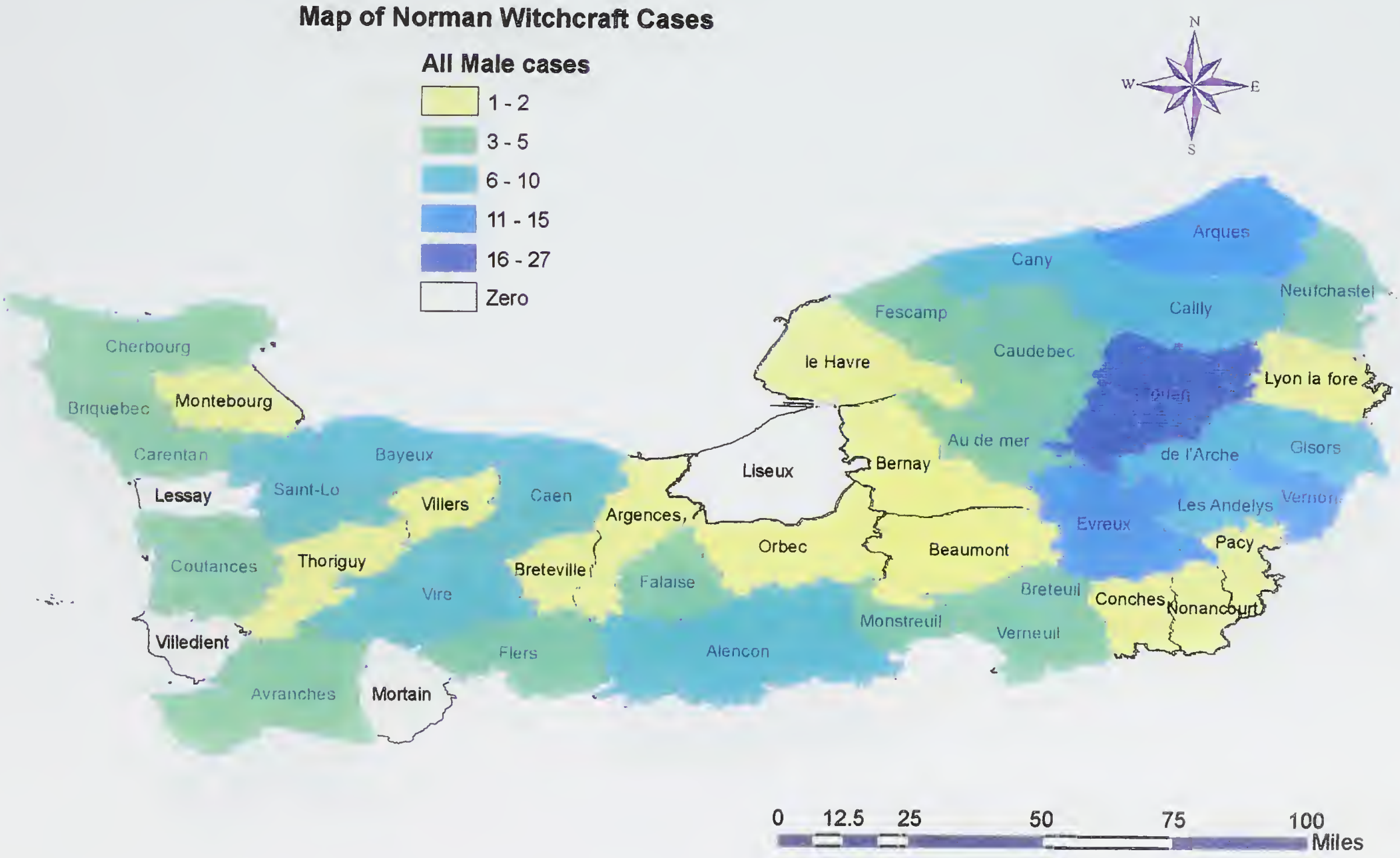
Map of Norman Witchcraft Cases



Map of Norman Witchcraft Cases



Map of Norman Witchcraft Cases



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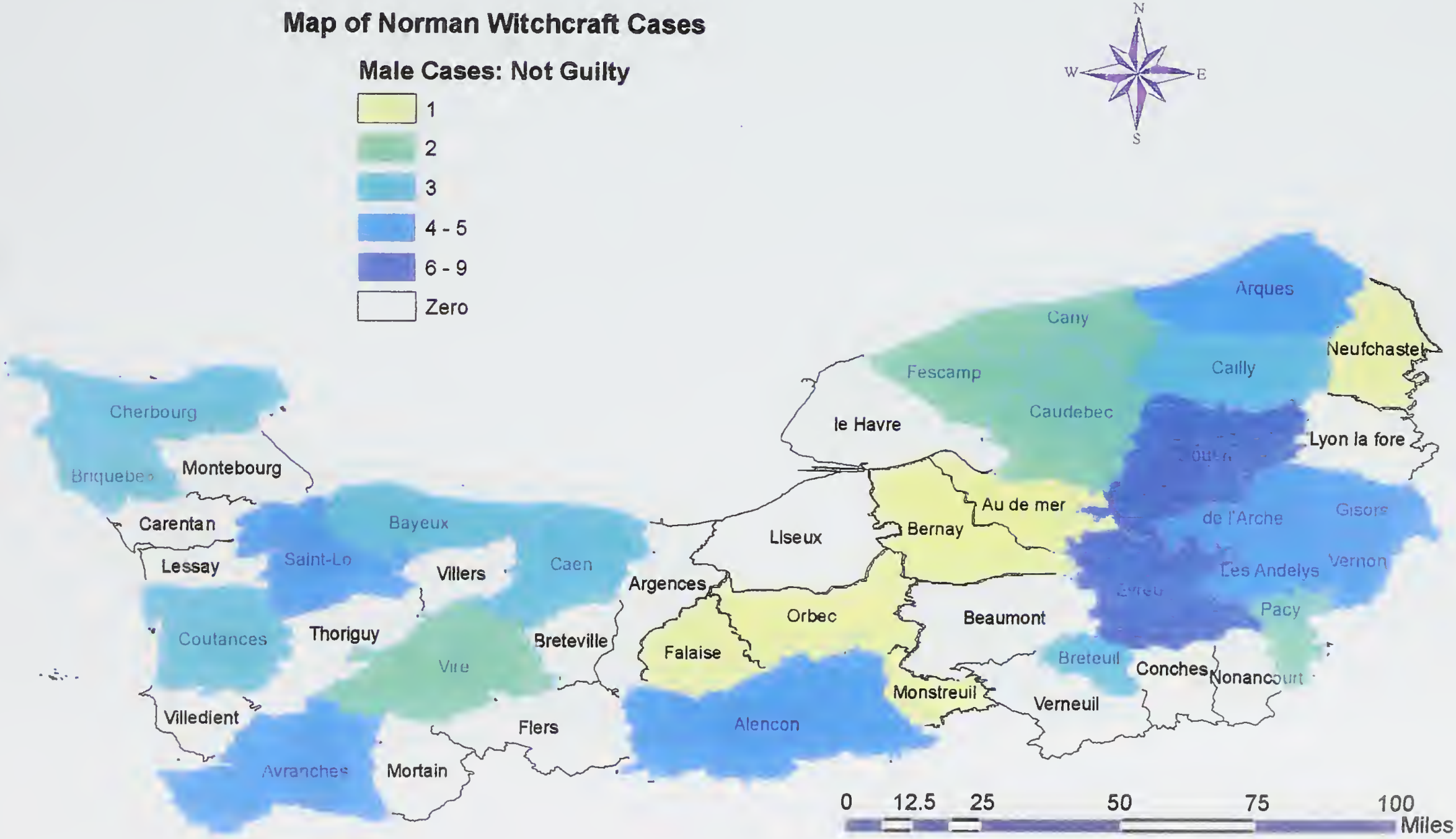

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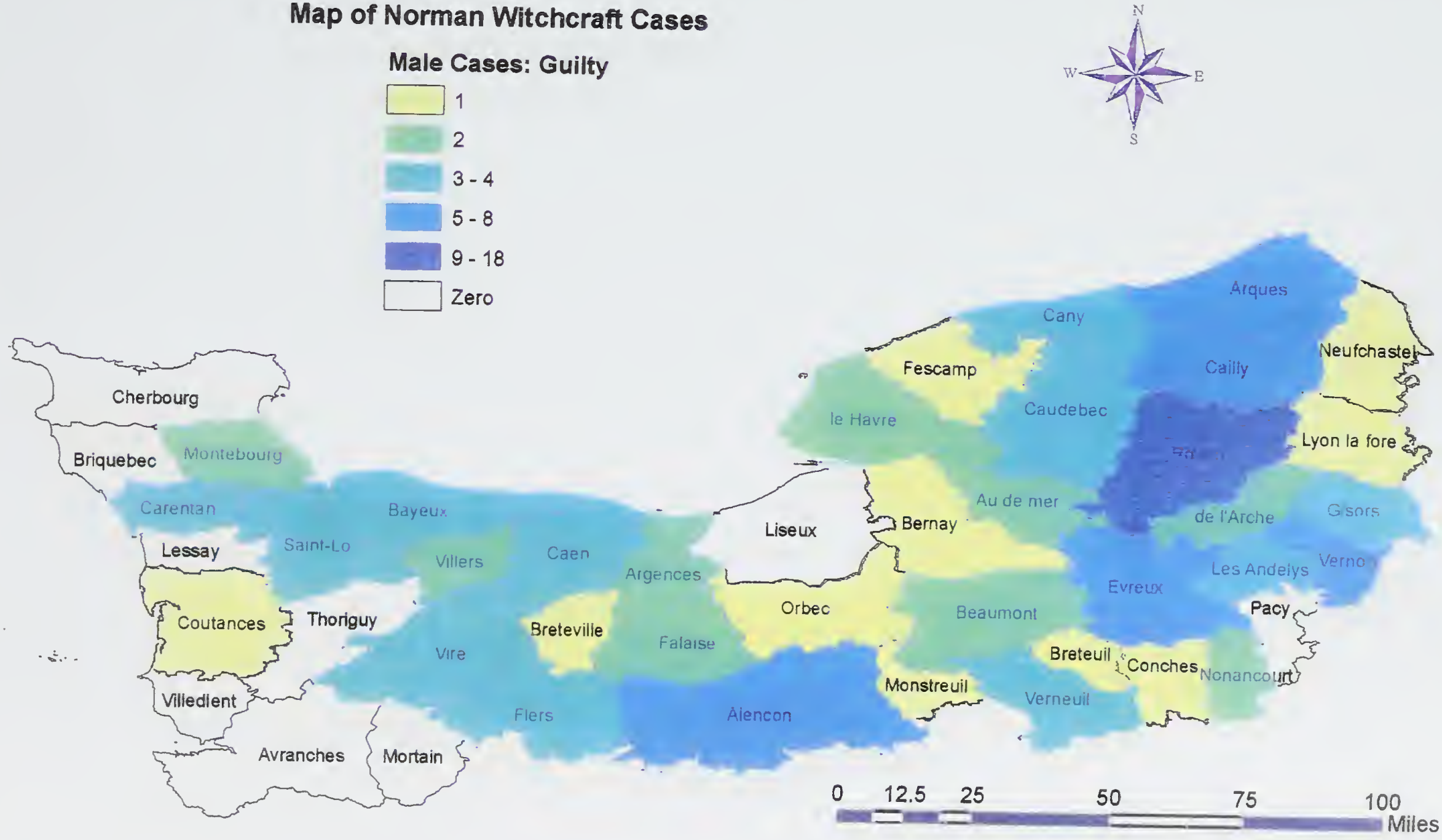
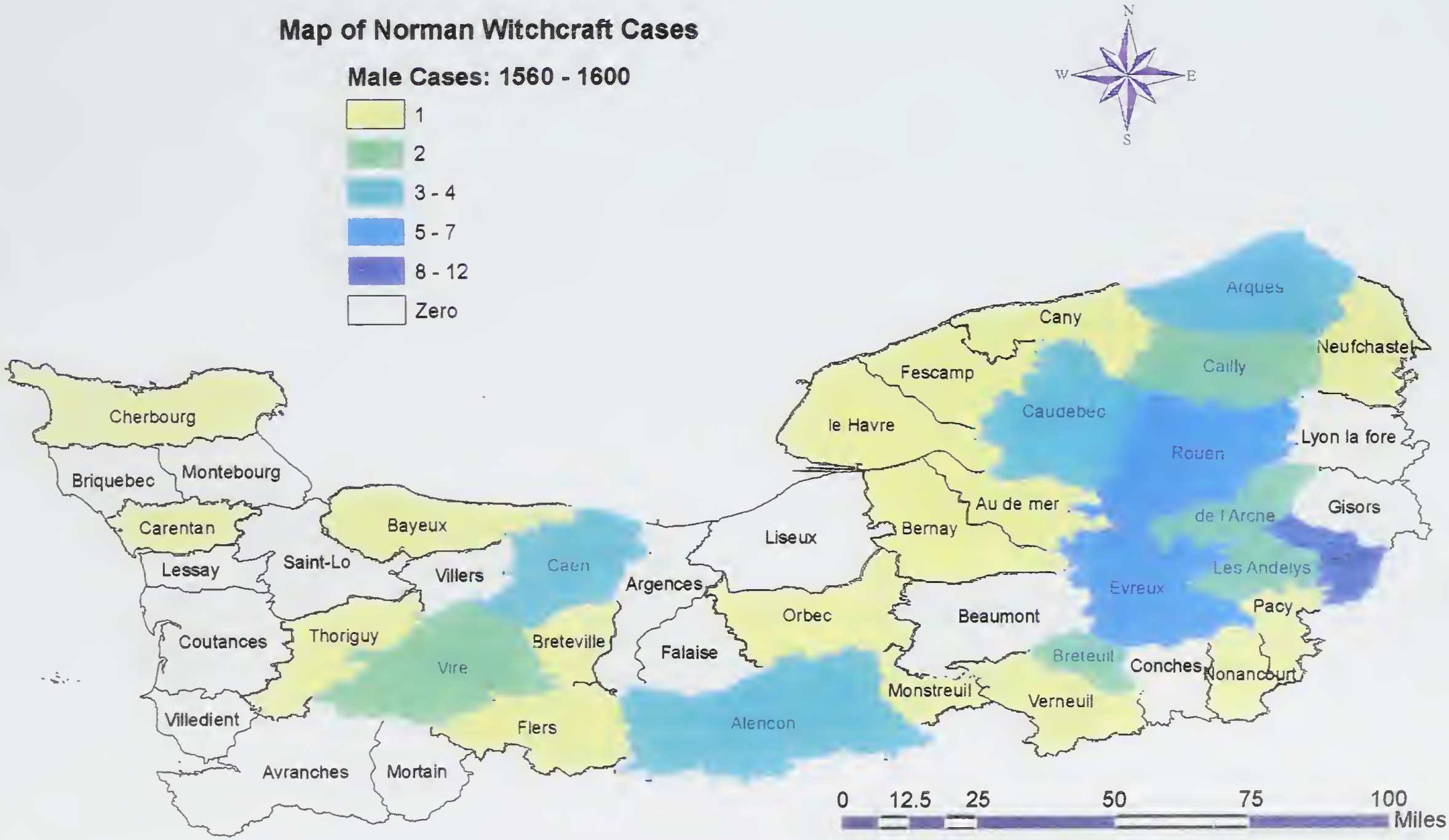
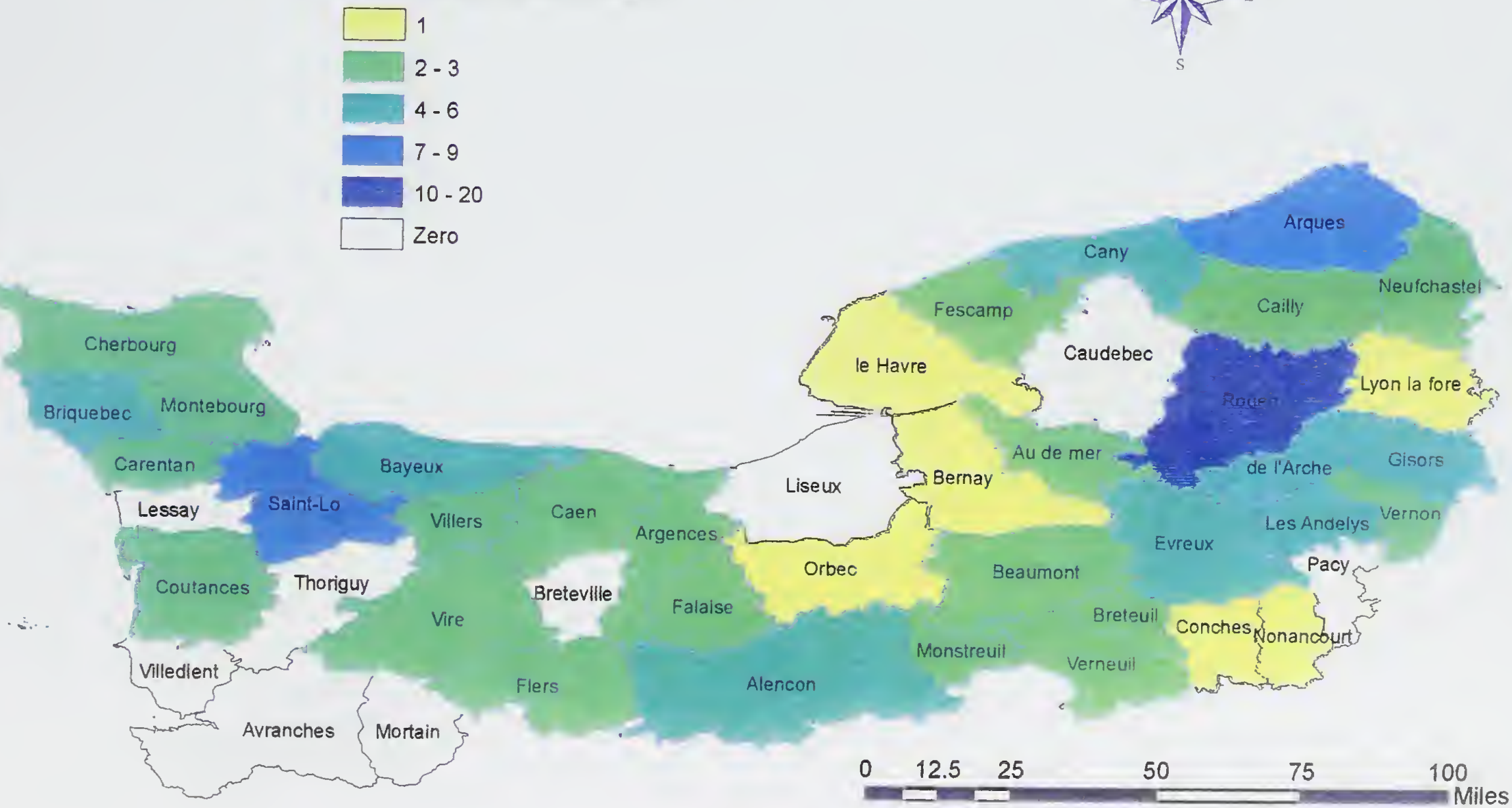



Map of Norman Witchcraft Cases
Male Cases: 1560 - 1600
1
2
3 - 4
5 - 7
8 - 12
Zero
N
W
E
S
Cherbourg
Briquebec
Montebourg
Carentan
Lessay
Saint-Lo
Bayeux
Villers
Caen
Coutances
Thoriguy
Breteville
Vire
Villedient
Flers
Avranches
Mortain
Argences
Liseux
Falaise
Orbec
Alencon
Cany
Fescamp
le Havre
Arques
Caudebec
Cailly
Neufchastel
Rouen
Lyon la fore
Au de mer
Bernay
de l'Arche
Gisors
Evreux
Les Andelys
Pacy
Beaumont
Breteuil
Conches
Nonancourt
Monstreuil
Verneuil
0 12.5 25 50 75 100
Miles

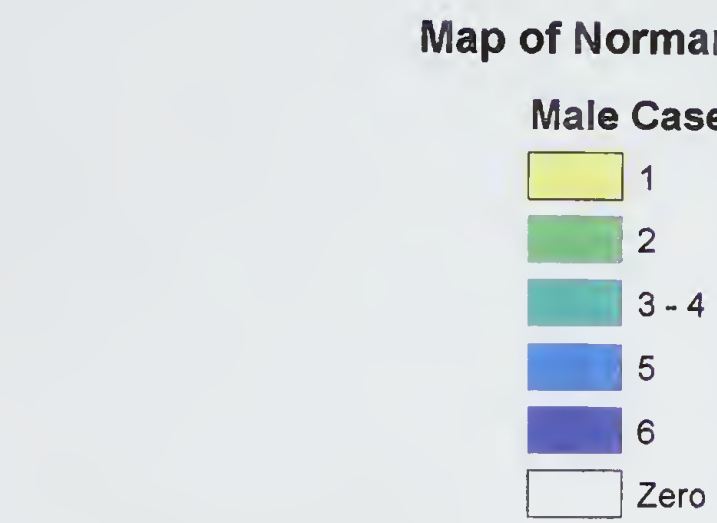
Map of Norman Witchcraft Cases

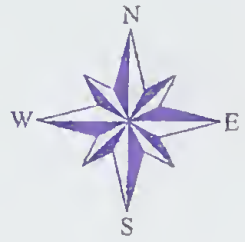
Male Cases: 1600 - 1640

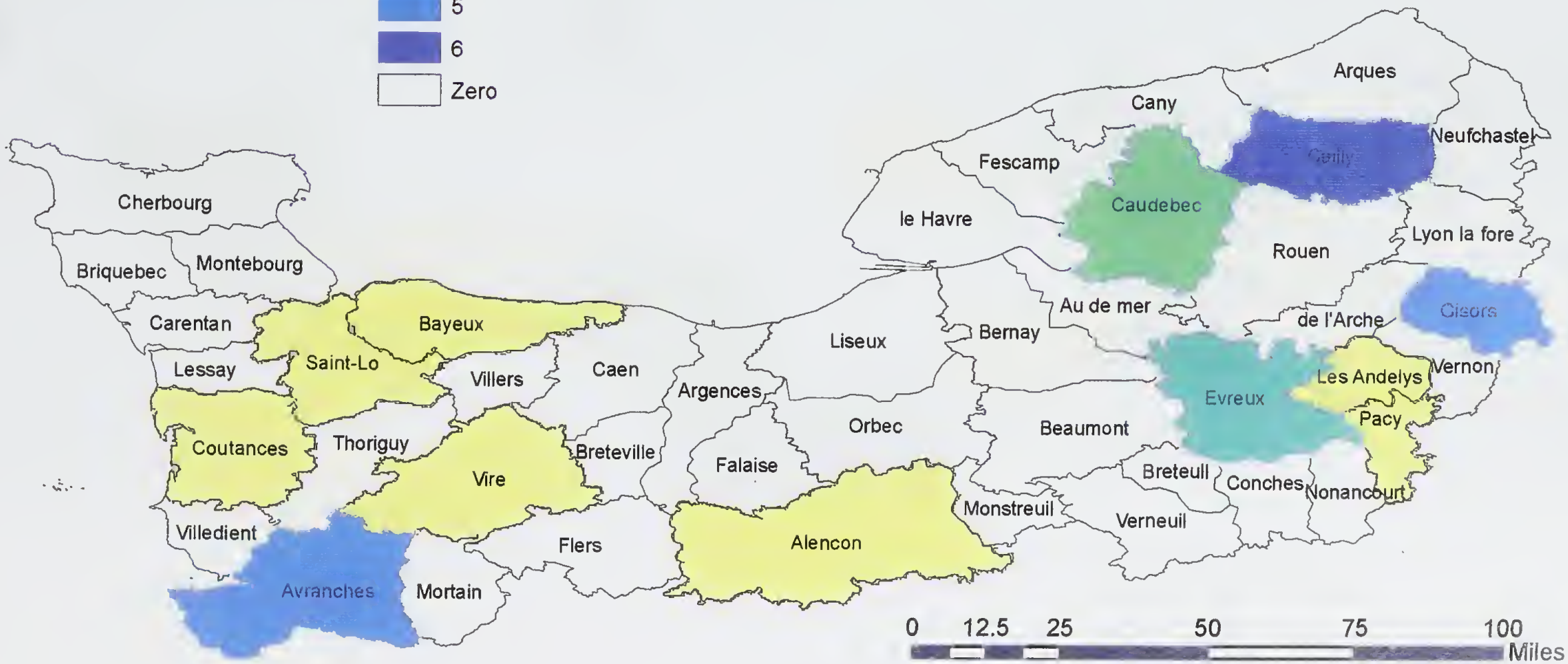


Map of Norman Witchcraft Cases

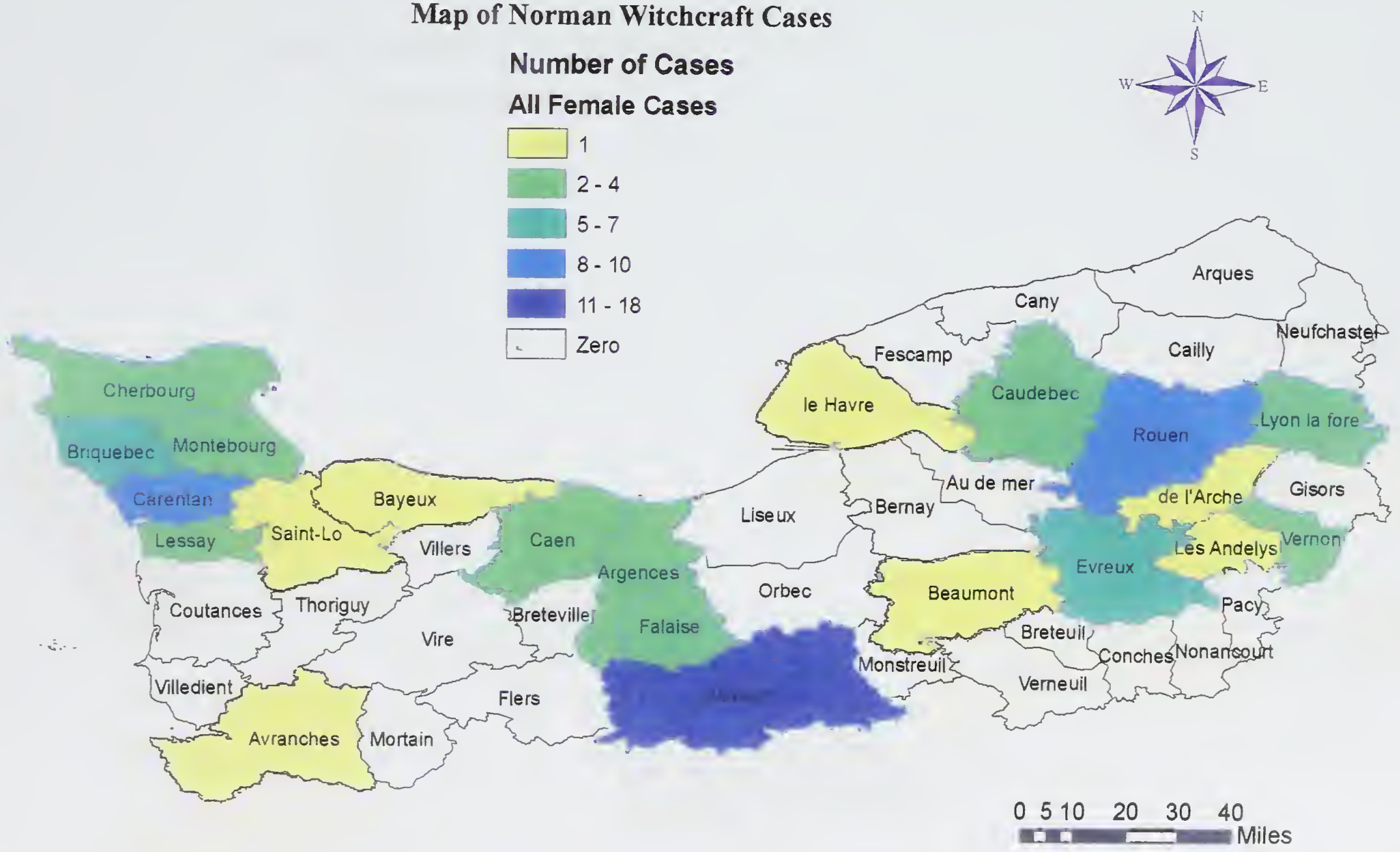
Male Cases: 1640 - 1680







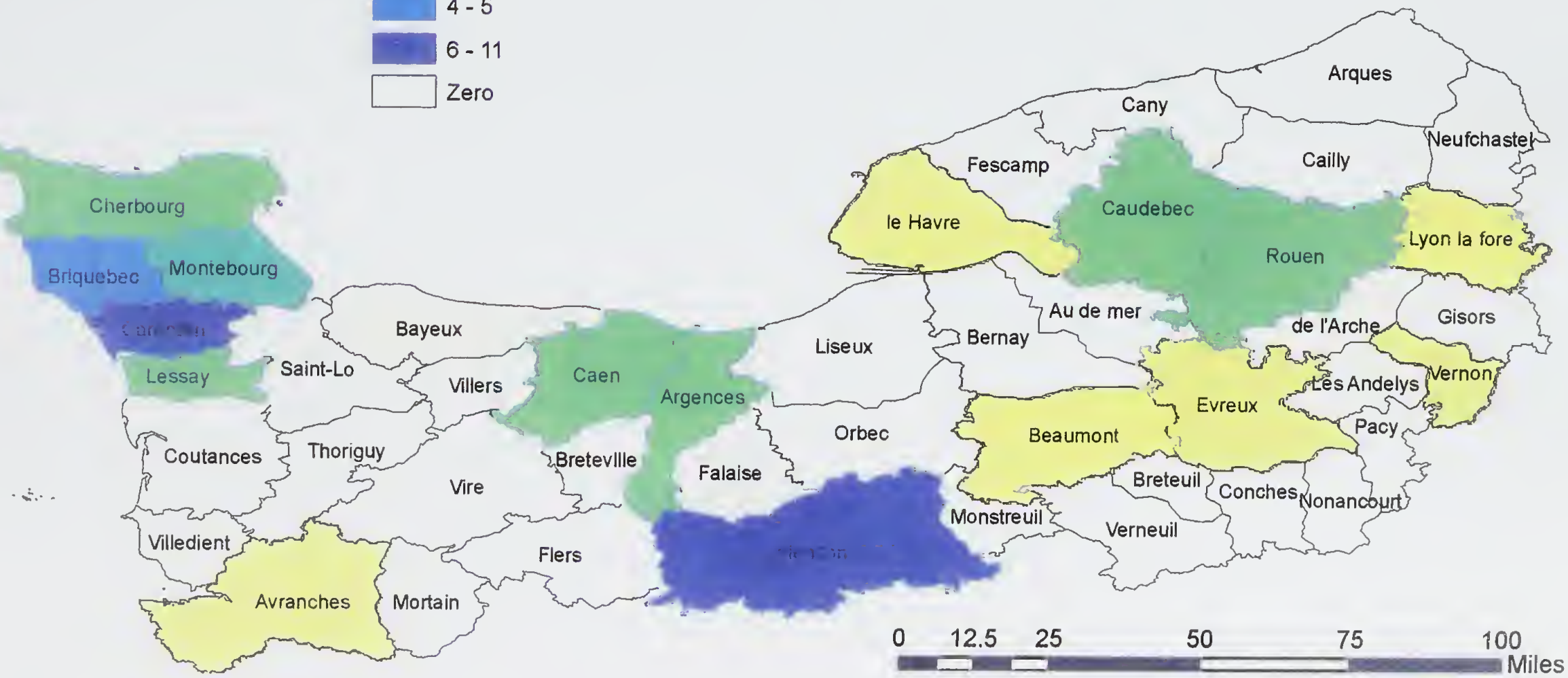
Map of Norman Witchcraft Cases



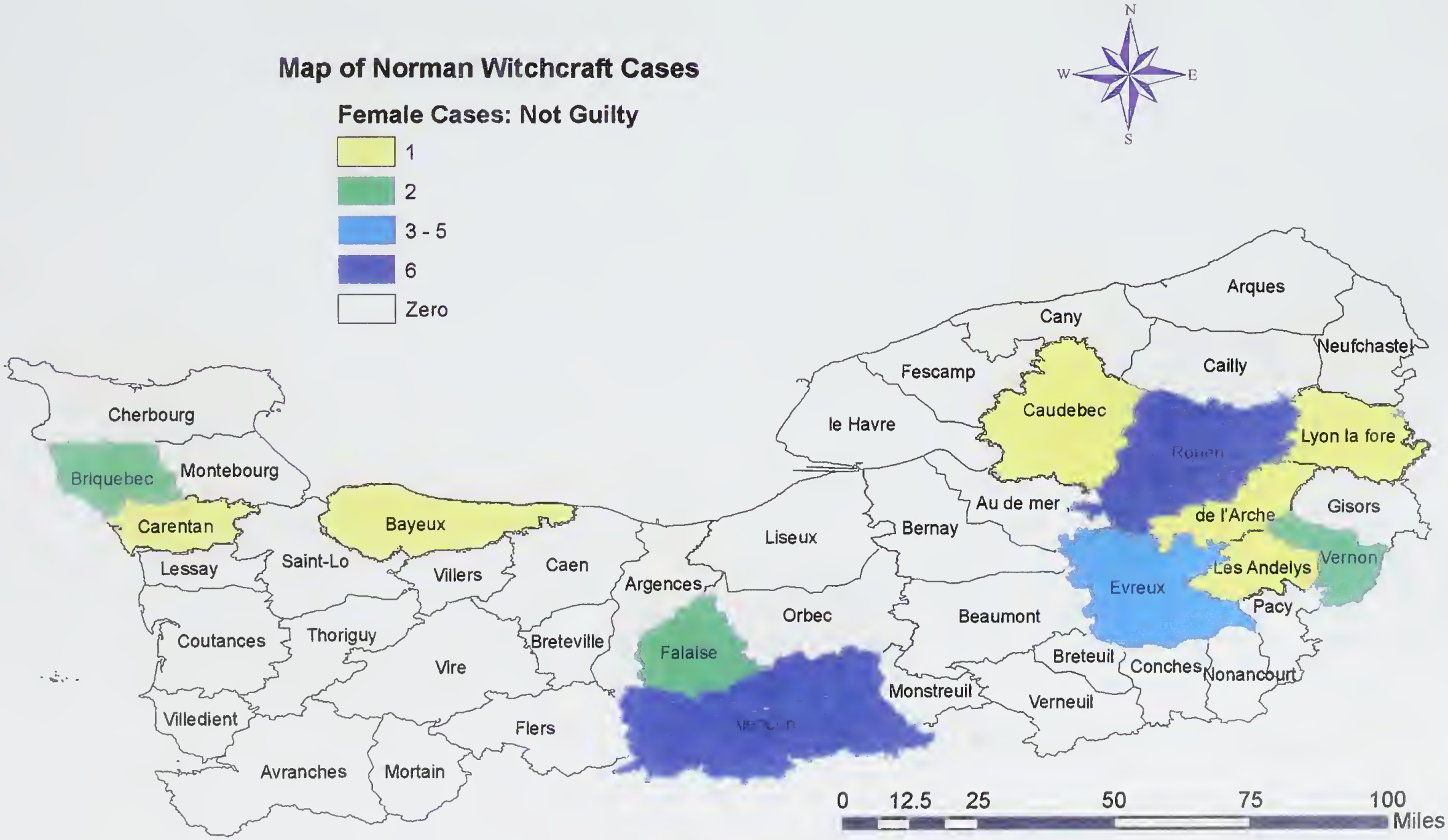
Map of Norman Witchcraft Cases

Female Cases: Guilty

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 - 5
- 6 - 11
- Zero

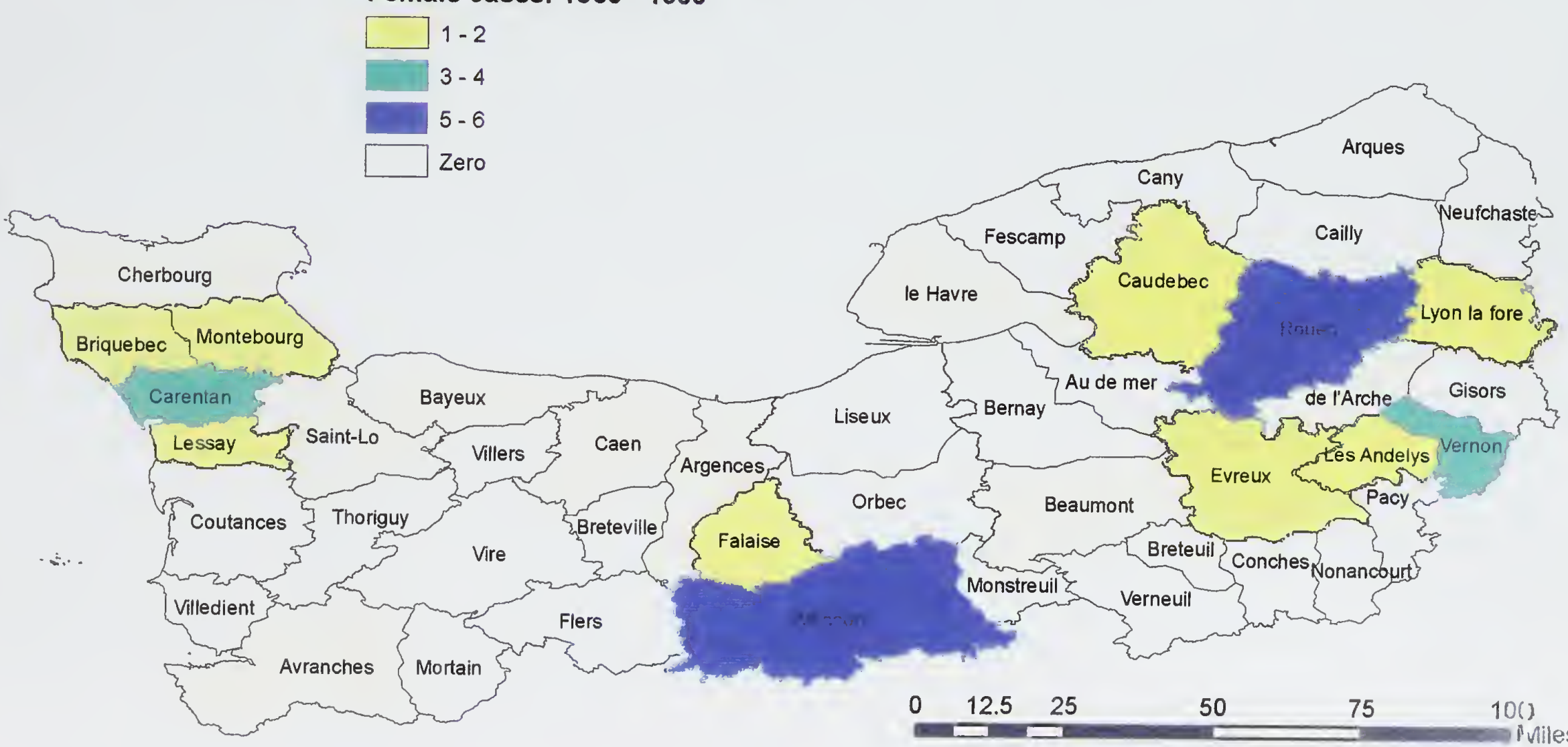


Map of Norman Witchcraft Cases



Map of Norman Witchcraft Cases

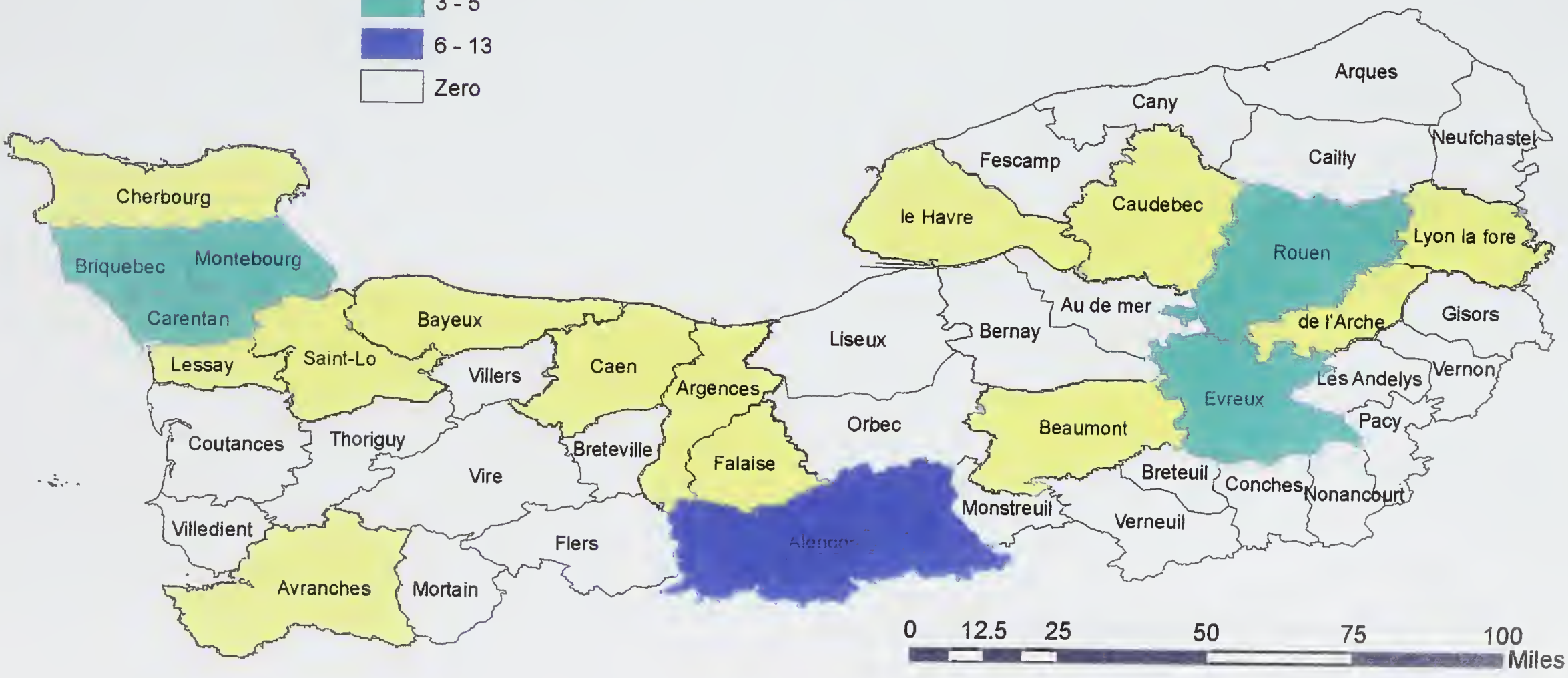
Female cases: 1560 - 1600



Map of Norman Witchcraft Cases

Female Cases: 1600 - 1640

1 - 2
3 - 5
6 - 13
Zero



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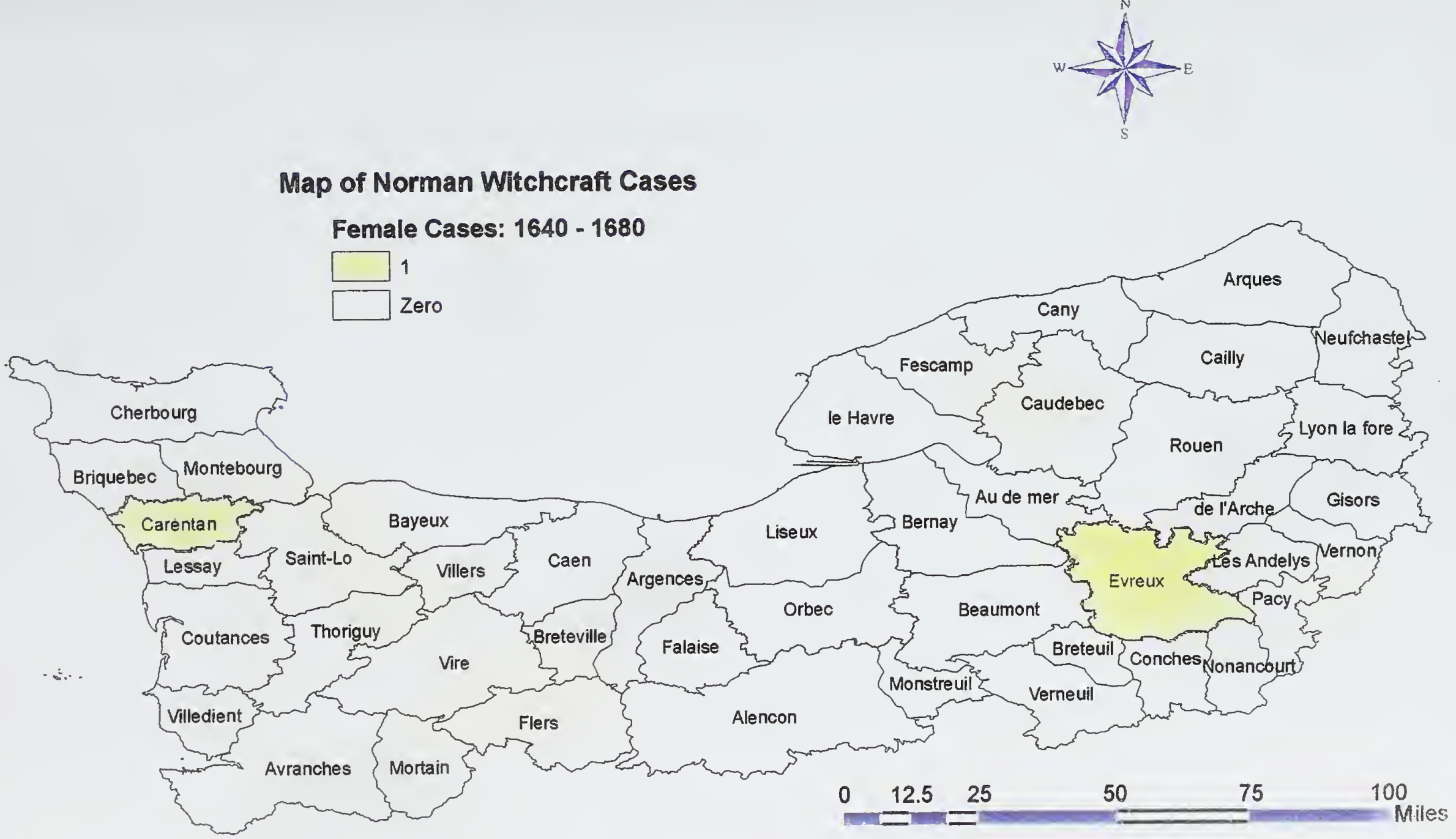

N
W
E
S
Map of Norman Witchcraft Cases
Female Cases: 1640 - 1680
1
Zero
Cherbourg
Briquebec
Montebourg
Carentan
Lessay
Saint-Lo
Coutances
Thoriguy
Villedient
Avranches
Mortain
Vire
Bayeux
Villers
Caen
Breteville
Flers
Liseux
Argences
Falaise
Alencon
le Havre
Fescamp
Cany
Caudebec
Arques
Neufchastel
Cailly
Rouen
Lyon la fore
Au de mer
Bernay
Orbec
Beaumont
Monstreuil
Verneuil
de l'Arche
Gisors
Les Andelys
Vernon
Evreux
Pacy
Breteuil
Conches
Nonancourt
0
12.5
25
50
75
100
Miles

Map of Norman Witchcraft Cases

Priest Cases: All

- 1
- 2
- 3
- Zero

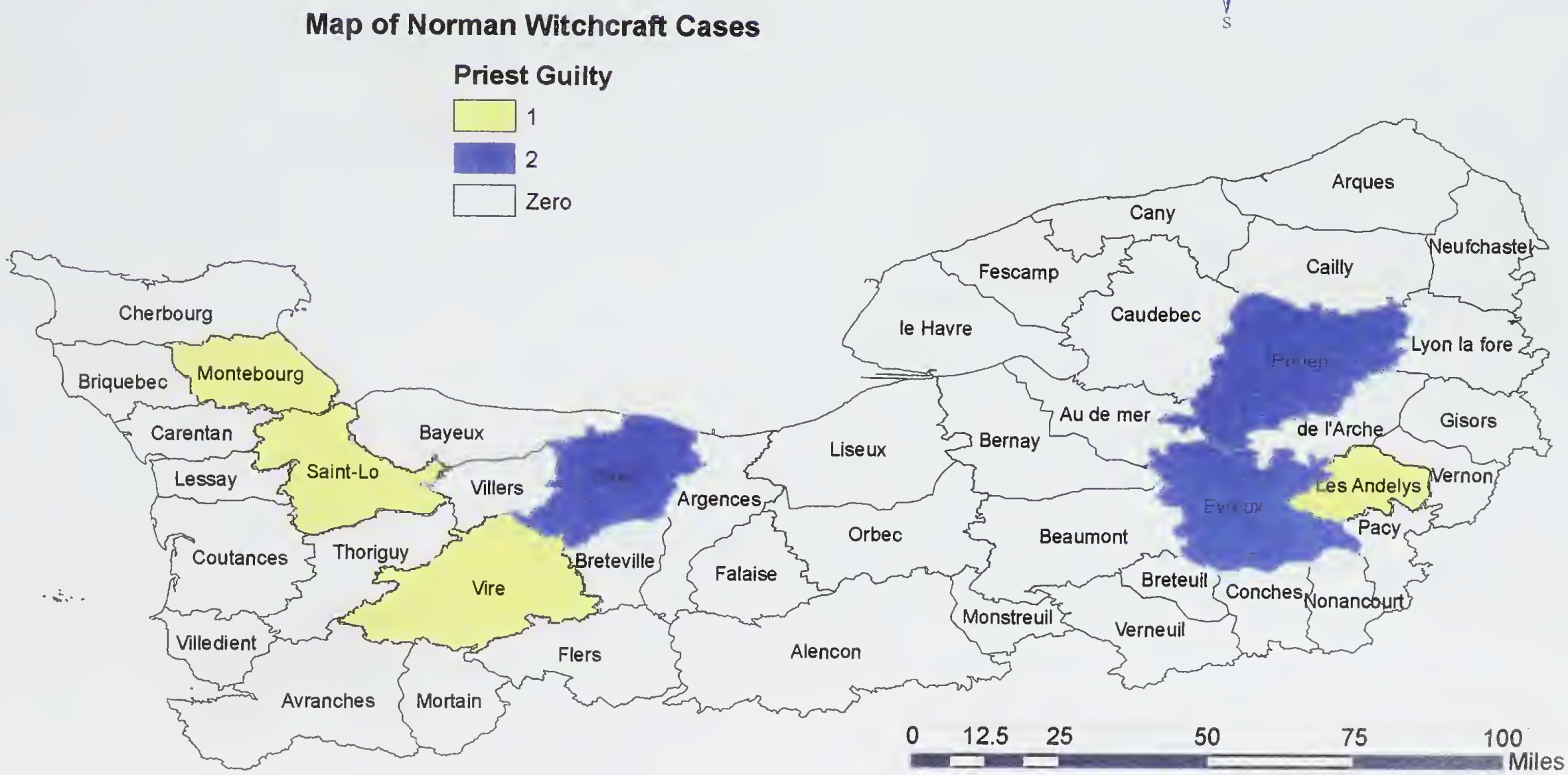
N
W
E
S

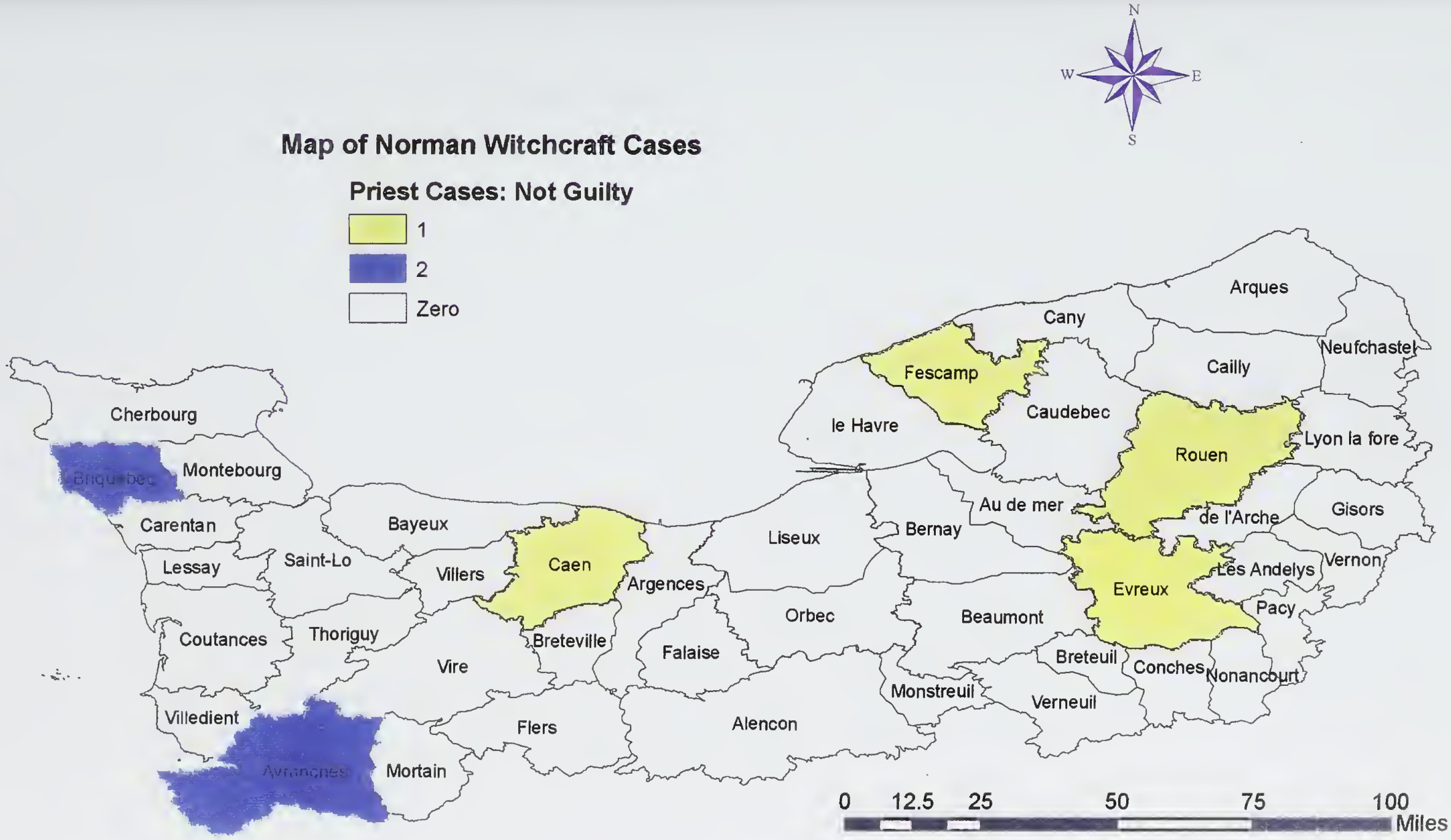
Cherbourg
Briquebec
Montebourg
Carentan
Bayeux
Lessay
Saint-Lo
Villers
Coutances
Thoriguy
Vire
Breteville
Villedient
Avranches
Mortain
Flers
Argences
Liseux
Falaise
Orbec
Alencon
Cany
Arques
Neufchastel
Fescamp
Cailly
Caudebec
le Havre
Lyon la fore
Au de mer
Bernay
de l'Arche
Gisors
Les Andelys
Vernon
Evreux
Pacy
Beaumont
Breteuil
Conches
Nonancourt
Monstreuil
Verneuil

0 12.5 25 50 75 100
Miles

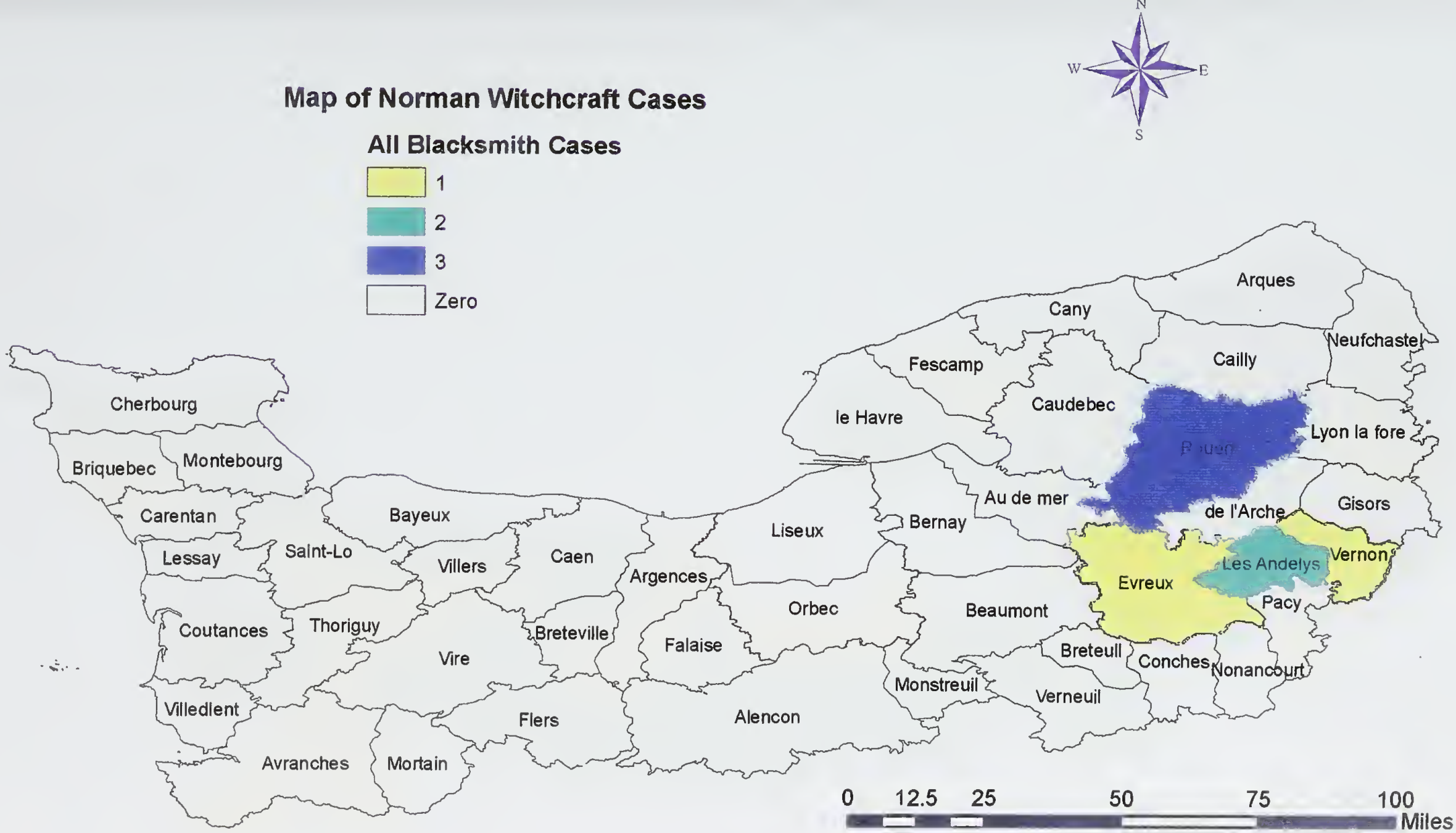
1620

Map of Norman Witchcraft Cases




N
W
E
S
Map of Norman Witchcraft Cases
Priest Cases: Not Guilty
1
2
Zero
Cherbourg
Montebourg
Carentan
Lessay
Saint-Lo
Coutances
Thoriguy
Villedient
Mortain
Bayeux
Villers
Caen
Argences
Breteville
Vire
Flers
Liseux
Orbec
Falaise
Alencon
le Havre
Fescamp
Cany
Arques
Neufchastel
Cailly
Caudebec
Rouen
Lyon la fore
Au de mer
Bernay
de l'Arche
Gisors
Evreux
Les Andelys
Vernon
Pacy
Beaumont
Breteuil
Conches
Nonancourt
Monstreuil
Verneuil
0
12.5
25
50
75
100
Miles

Map of Norman Witchcraft Cases



Map of Norman Witchcraft Cases

All Shepherd Cases

- 1
- 2 - 3
- 4 - 6
- 7 - 8
- 9 - 11
- Zero

N
W E
S

Arques
Cany
Neufchastel
Fescamp
Cailly
le Havre
Caudebec
Lyon la fore
Rouen
Au de mer
de l'Arche
Gisors
Cherbourg
Briquebec
Montebourg
Carentan
Bayeux
Liseux
Bernay
Lessay
Saint-Lo
Villers
Caen
Argences
Les Andelys
Vernon
Evreux
Pacy
Orbec
Beaumont
Coutances
Thoriguy
Breteville
Falaise
Breteuil
Conches
Nonancourt
Vire
Monstreuil
Verneuil
Villedient
Flers
Alencon
Avranches
Mortain

0 12.5 25 50 75 100
Miles

Map of Norman Witchcraft Cases

Shepherd Cases: Guilty

- 1
- 2 - 3
- 4 - 5
- 6 - 8
- Zero

N
W E
S

Cherbourg
Briquebec
Montebourg
Carentan
Lessay
Saint-Lo
Coutances
Thorigny
Villedient
Avranches
Mortain
Bayeux
Villers
Caen
Argences
Vire
Breteville
Falaise
Flers
Alencon
Liseux
Orbec
Bernay
Monstreuil
Verneuil
Beaumont
Evreux
Breteuil
Conches
Nonancourt
Pacy
Les Andelys
Vernon
Gisors
Au de mer
de l'Arche
Rouen
Caudebec
le Havre
Fescamp
Cany
Arques
Neufchastel
Lyon la fore

0 12.5 25 50 75 100
Miles

Map of Norman Witchcraft Cases

Shepherd Cases: Not Guilty

1

2

3

4 - 5

Zero

Argences

Cany

Neufchatel

Fecamp

Cailly

Caudebec

le Havre

Lyon la foret

Rouen

Au de mer

de l'Arche

Pas Andelys

Verneuil

Pacy

Beaumont

Bretteuil

Conches

Monnaincourt

Monfreuil

Vernueil

Orbec

Lisieux

Bernay

Falaise

Mezeray

Bayeux

Caen

Villers

Bretteville

Thorigny

Vire

Flers

Villedieu

Avranches

Mortain

Lessay

Saint Lo

Carentan

Periers

Coutances

Granville

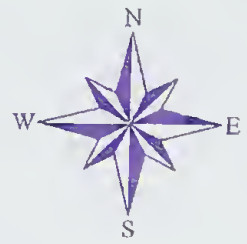
0 12.5 25 50 75 100

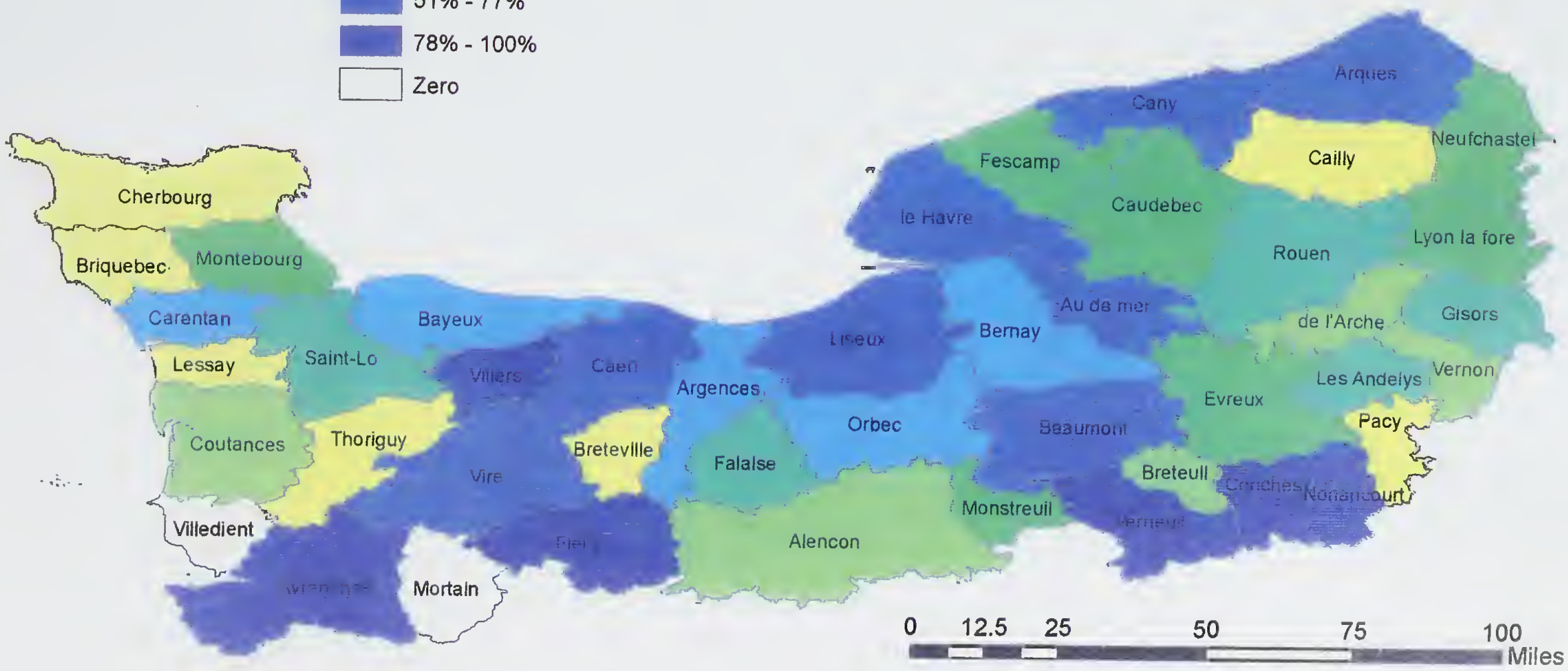
Miles

Map of Norman Witchcraft Cases

Male Cases: Conviction Rates

- 0%
- 1% - 25%
- 26% - 37%
- 38% - 46%
- 47% - 50%
- 51% - 77%
- 78% - 100%
- Zero

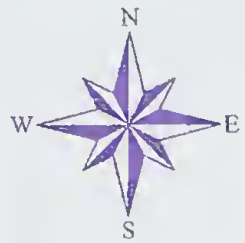


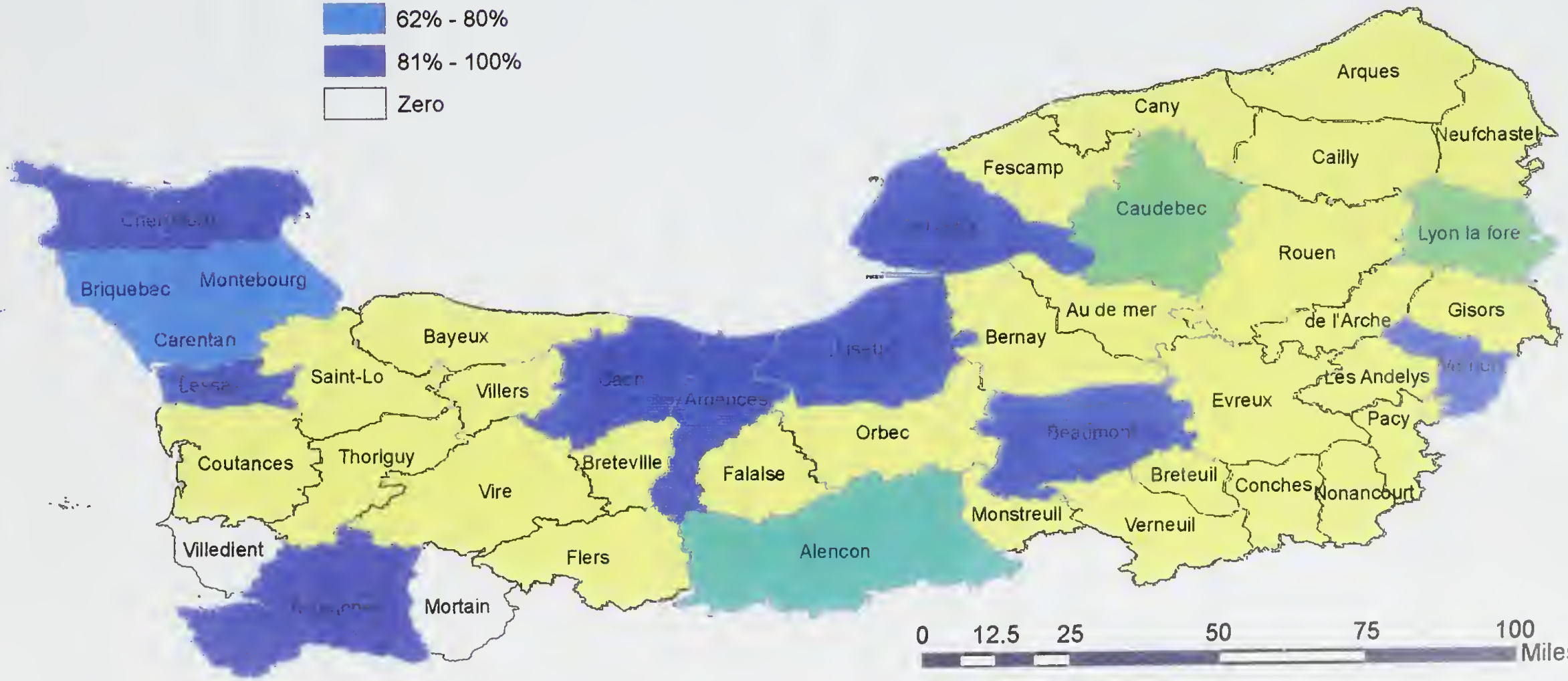


Map of Norman Witchcraft Cases

Female Cases: Conviction Rates

- 0% - 16%
- 17% - 50%
- 51% - 61%
- 62% - 80%
- 81% - 100%
- Zero





CHAPTER 5

MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE OF KENTISH WITCHCRAFT

Space is a practiced space.

Michel de Certeau

Like Normandy, Kentish witchcraft has remained unmapped. However, when the cases of witchcraft are placed on the ground, interesting relationships can be observed. The spatial qualities of Kentish witchcraft can be seen in the maps that follow (figures 4.3–4.23). The first map (figure 4.3) merely shows the location of all the towns in early modern Kent, regardless of size. When the layer of all witchcraft accusations is added to the Kent map (figure 4.4), the broad features of this supernatural historical geography emerge. The first two observations are oppositional. First, witches are spread across Kent. No specific territory is untouched by some kind of accusation of witchcraft. Second, there are blank spaces on the map. As other researchers have asked, why are there not *more* cases of witchcraft? Historians refer to this period of witch-hunting as "the craze," yet in Kent there were only 166 cases spread over 120 years (fewer than two per year). Resolving this tension—widespread yet spotty occurrences—requires a more nuanced view than other accounts have given.

The question "why aren't there more" is layered with more specific questions: What differentiates, for example, Dover (no accusations) from Cranbrook (12 accusations)? What connects Canterbury (5 accusations) to Goudhurst (4 accusations)? In fact, one of the challenges of historical geography is that it often poses questions that have no or no easy answer. One broad observation that can be made, however, about Kentish witchcraft is revealed when the town population data are compared to

the accusation map. Referring to the major Kentish town populations in the 1600 table in chapter 2 (figure 2.1), one sees that population is crucial to Kentish witchcraft.

The major population centers of Kent—Canterbury, Sandwich, Deptford, Gravesend, Rochester, Maidstone—had nine cases total over those 120 years (and Canterbury accounts for five of those). The towns of middling populations—Gravesend, Dartford, Tonbridge, Sevenoaks, Tenterden, Folkestone, Ashford, Faversham—had eleven cases. The remaining 146 witches, they lived their lives in small villages. Instead of asking what general tensions people in early modern Europe faced, one should ask what pressures rural villagers faced in specific locations. To offer the explanation that rural life was hard does not explain why villagers who suffered the same difficulties reacted differently, one village employing the 'tool' of witchcraft accusations, another village making no accusations at all.

The All Accusations map (figure 4.4) also reveals that the coastal towns had fewer accusations than the interior. Dover, Sandwich, Folkestone, and Ramsgate—all had few accusations (two, in fact, both from Folkestone). The same is true for the areas close to London. The vast bulk of Kentish witchcraft is localized in the heartland of Kent, not on its borders.

When one adds gender as a filter for the next layering, other features are revealed (figures 4.5-4.9). The map of female accusations shows a similar pattern to the overall picture: accusations against women are made across the Kentish landscape. While female cases are found throughout Kent, they are found in the small villages much more frequently. The map of male accusations shows both the lower frequency of men being accused and their relative focus in two regions of Kent: the Downs and

the Weald.[1] Besides a single case from the Isle of Grain, all male accusations in Kent are found in those two regions.[2] Male cases are equally split between towns (Maidstone and New Romney) and villages. The addition of marital status to this gender picture subtly shifts the picture. Widows are more likely to be found in the Weald than anywhere else in Kent. Married women are more likely to be found in the Downs; of the 49 married-women cases, 33 are located there.[3] Widows, on the other had, seem to be localized in the Weald and southern edge of the Downs; of the 21 cases involving them, 13 are located there.

Canterbury is unique in its inclusion. Every filtering of the data—be it gender, marriage, or other category—shows that Canterbury has at least one example. Because the Kent records contain the location of each accused, the resulting maps place an accusation where the parties and behavior were located. As the largest urban center in Kent, one might Canterbury it would be insulated from certain, perhaps "rustic,"

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[1] The regions in Kent can be clearly seen using the All Accusation or All Female cases maps (figures 4.4-4.5). The underlying layer shows bands of color, and the central "light" band is the Downs. The region just below that band is the Weald, and the region just above is the salt marshes.

[2] The single male case from the Isle of Grain is a bit misleading. George Winchester, accused in 1605, was married to Anne Winchester, also an accused witch. PRO Assize 35/47/3/31-32. A limitation of the male cases is that only the details of the case record reveal their marital status, not the remaining indictments. Thus, the indictment of Thomas Goddard does not reflect his status as a widower, but the dossier notes this. In female cases, the indictments generally note the marital status of the accused—in fact, that's often the only social data the indictment relates about women.

[3] There is some confusion over how to place accusations against "spinsters." The word is used in connection with married women; see, for instance, Katherine Burbage, PRO, Assize 35/20/4/7; 35/21/1/6; 35/21/8/39 (1578) and Katherine Young PRO Assize 35/73/5/71 (1631), and young daughters, Martha Young, PRO, Assize 35/73/5/71 (1631) as well as other females. Malcom Gaskill recommends including spinsters in the category of "non-widows" in Kent. Gaskill, *Witchcraft in Kent*, 141.

popular beliefs. The opposite appears to be true: Canterbury carried all the beliefs of its diverse population within its environs.

The final set of maps shows the locations of guilty and not-guilty verdicts in Kent (figures 4.17–4.22) organized chronologically. The striking features of these maps are that there seems to be no region in Kent that does not find a witch guilty before 1640, while there also seems to be no region that does not find a witch not-guilty before 1640. The most obvious explanation for this geography is that each case was decided on its own features, not according to any overarching paradigm. A second observation is that, clearly, everyone in Kent believed in magic. The maps also show an interesting flow in the not-guilty findings. First, the data show that after 1660, not one person accused of witchcraft was found guilty of that crime in Kent.

Looking more closely at that feature, the guilty verdicts in Kent after 1620 are all found in small villages, all outside the urban reach of London and other Kentish population centers.[4] If the theory of the "disenchantment of the world" needed some support, Kentish witchcraft seems to provide it.[5] Certainly belief in witchcraft persists after the courts stop persecuting those cases, and the use of witchcraft cases to reflect

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[4] Except, as noted, in Canterbury, where- as in every other category— there is the anomalous example of a guilty finding in 1651 (its final one). Dorothy Rawlins, CKS, Session Records, QSB 2/13

[5] The idea that modern science removed magical sensibilities about the world is attributed to Max Weber in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. The same idea underlies Keith Thomas's work, *Decline of Magic*, though he argues that Protestantism (and more generally, religion) removed more of this magical awareness from popular culture than early modern science did. But see James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), who correctly notes that the process of disenchantment was slow, uneven, and inconsistent across the early modern rural landscape.

popular beliefs is limited in this way. However, these cases do form a marker of popular pressures and reflect the concerns of rural villagers, filtered as they are through the elite legal process. In the small, dispersed villages of the Weald, witchcraft continues to form a part of their landscape into the late seventeenth century (and probably beyond).

These relationships make more sense when religion is factored into the equation. While Kent was an area of strong Protestant belief, not all Protestants were the same. Indeed, areas of more radical Protestant belief were scattered throughout Kent. Similarly, support for a more Arminian-centered Church of England could be found in other areas of Kent. The areas of more radical Protestant belief were the Weald and certain larger towns such as Maidstone, Ashford, and the smaller parishes of Cranbrook and Tenterden.[6] The North Downs and the areas closer to London were areas more likely to follow Arminian practices and beliefs. Utilizing that data, the maps illustrate that the radical Protestant areas also had a higher level of witchcraft accusations than did other areas of Kent. Indeed, as Keith Thomas argued, Protestant beliefs often fueled witchcraft accusations and their related beliefs.[7] As the Weald was a center of radical Protestant belief, so too can it be labeled a center of Kentish witchcraft.

Another religious factor in the geography of Kentish witchcraft is the foreign element. Very few witchcraft accusations are found in the coastal towns and villages. One factor all these areas have in common is the presence of large "stranger"

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[6] See chapter 2, above, 106-8.

[7] Thomas, *Decline of Magic*, 594.

communities. Sandwich, Maidstone, and their environs all saw the immigration of large numbers of foreign Protestants, mainly French and Flemish, and this factor seems to have affected the willingness of the local populace to use witchcraft as a paradigm. The most likely relationship connecting these two factors was the new economic opportunities these stranger communities brought with them.[8] This economic-religious linking is reinforced by the observation that some areas of the radically Protestant Weald were also the hardest hit in the decline of the traditional broadcloth industries.[9]

Overall, what these maps reveal is that the social geography of the supernatural, viewed through the lens of witchcraft accusations, in Kent is complex. No single factor—religion, economics, gender, or marital status—serves to isolate a person who might have been seen as a witch by his or her neighbors. The lack of that predominance illustrates how powerful the idea of magic was for this region, in this time. Perhaps the reason why Canterbury, being the largest population center in Kent, contained examples of so many forms of witchcraft is that it reflected all the complexities that Kentish society held.

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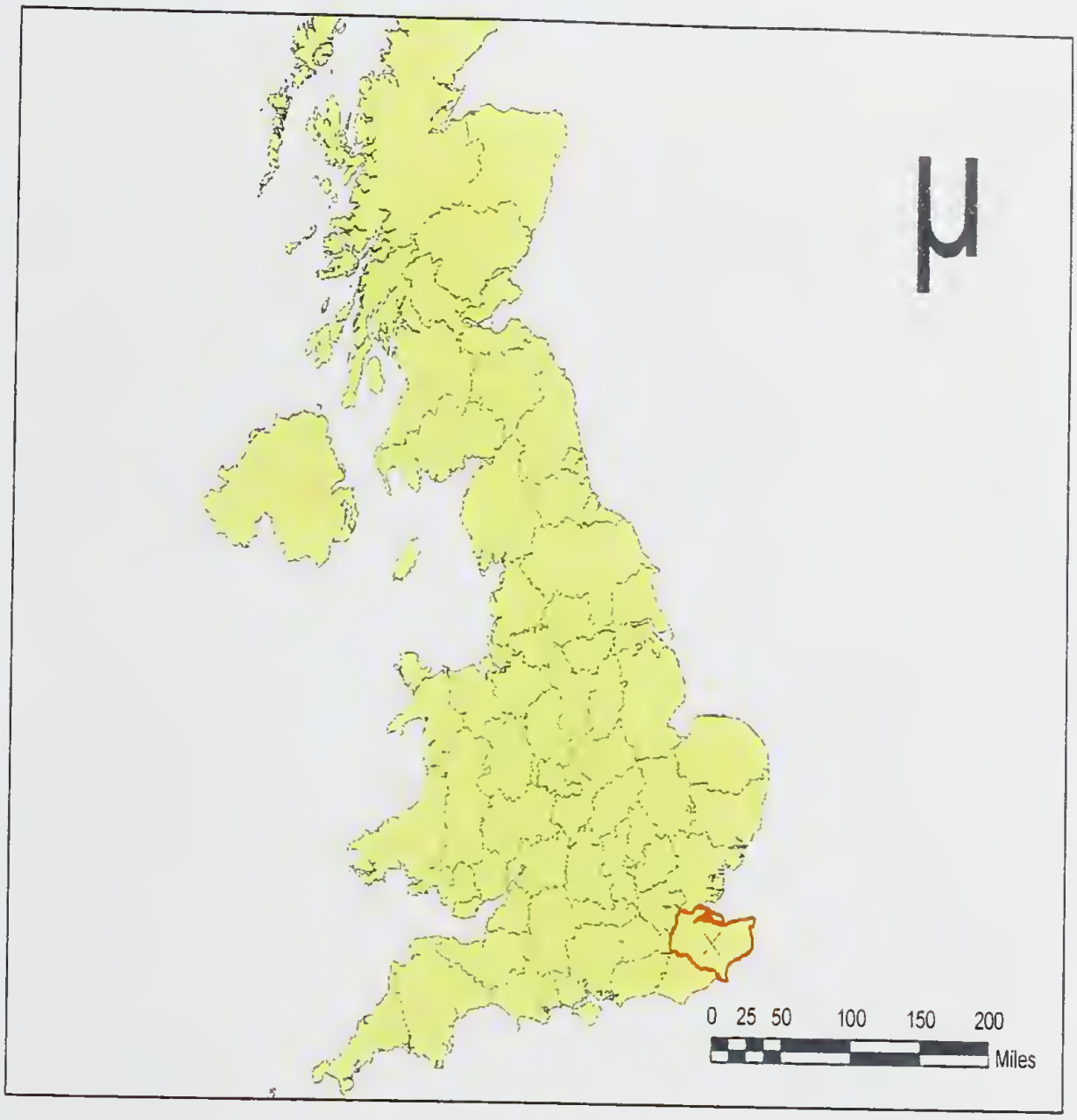
[8] As noted, these immigrants brought new "drapery" manufacturing with them as they settled in Kent.

[9] Cranbrook, for example, was an area of strong Puritan belief and an equally radical loss of clothing industries. Other towns near Cranbrook, Bindenden, and Tenderden show the same features.



Location of Kent

Map of Kent and Normandy
(digitzed from Map of Kingdom of France 1740)


Kent Witchcraft Cases
Kent Towns
Dartford
Gravesend
Rochester
Maidstone
Cranbrook
Ashford
Canterbury
Ramsgate
Dover
Folkestone
N
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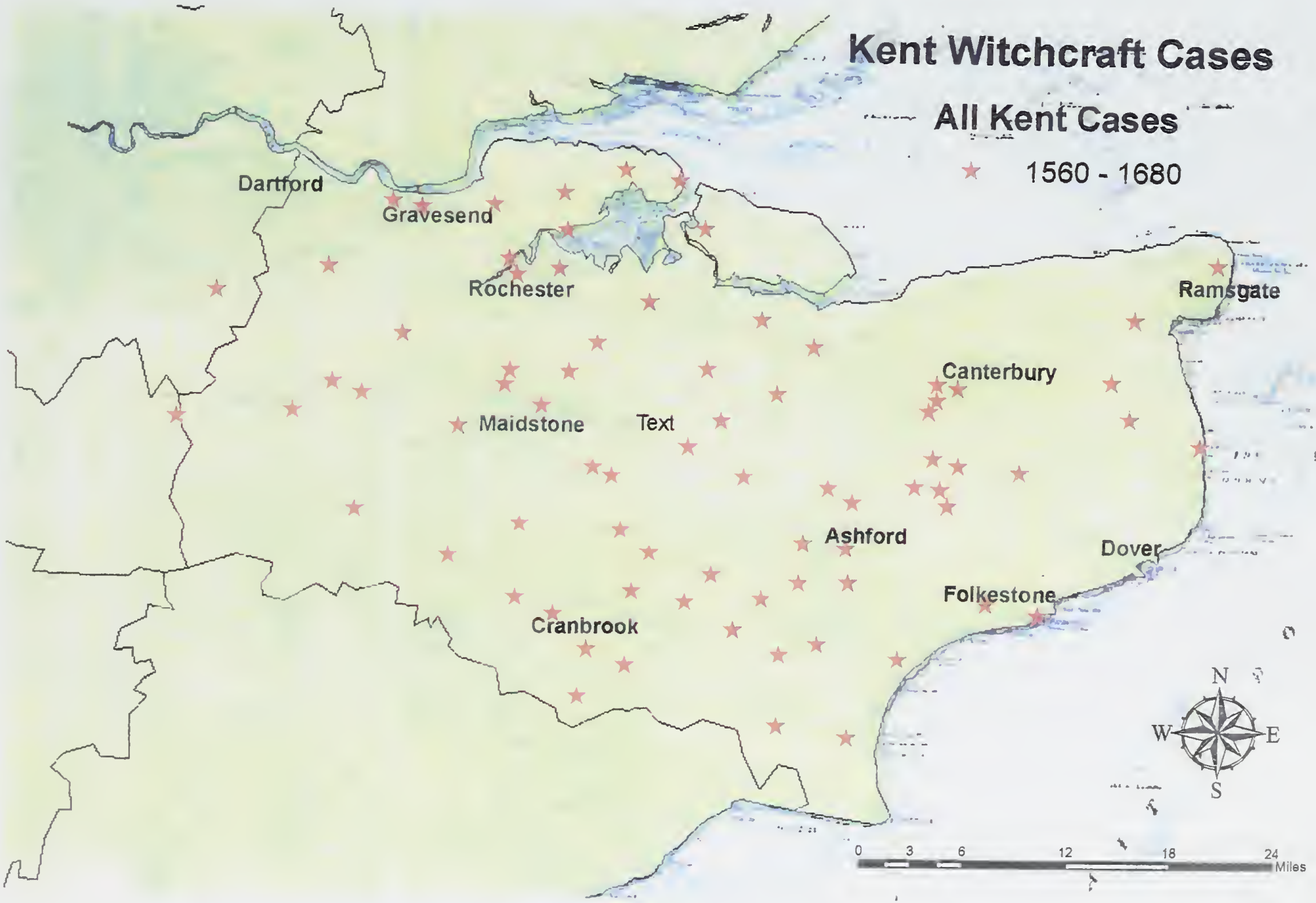
Kent Witchcraft Cases
All Kent Cases
1560 - 1680
Dartford
Gravesend
Rochester
Ramsgate
Canterbury
Maidstone
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Folkestone
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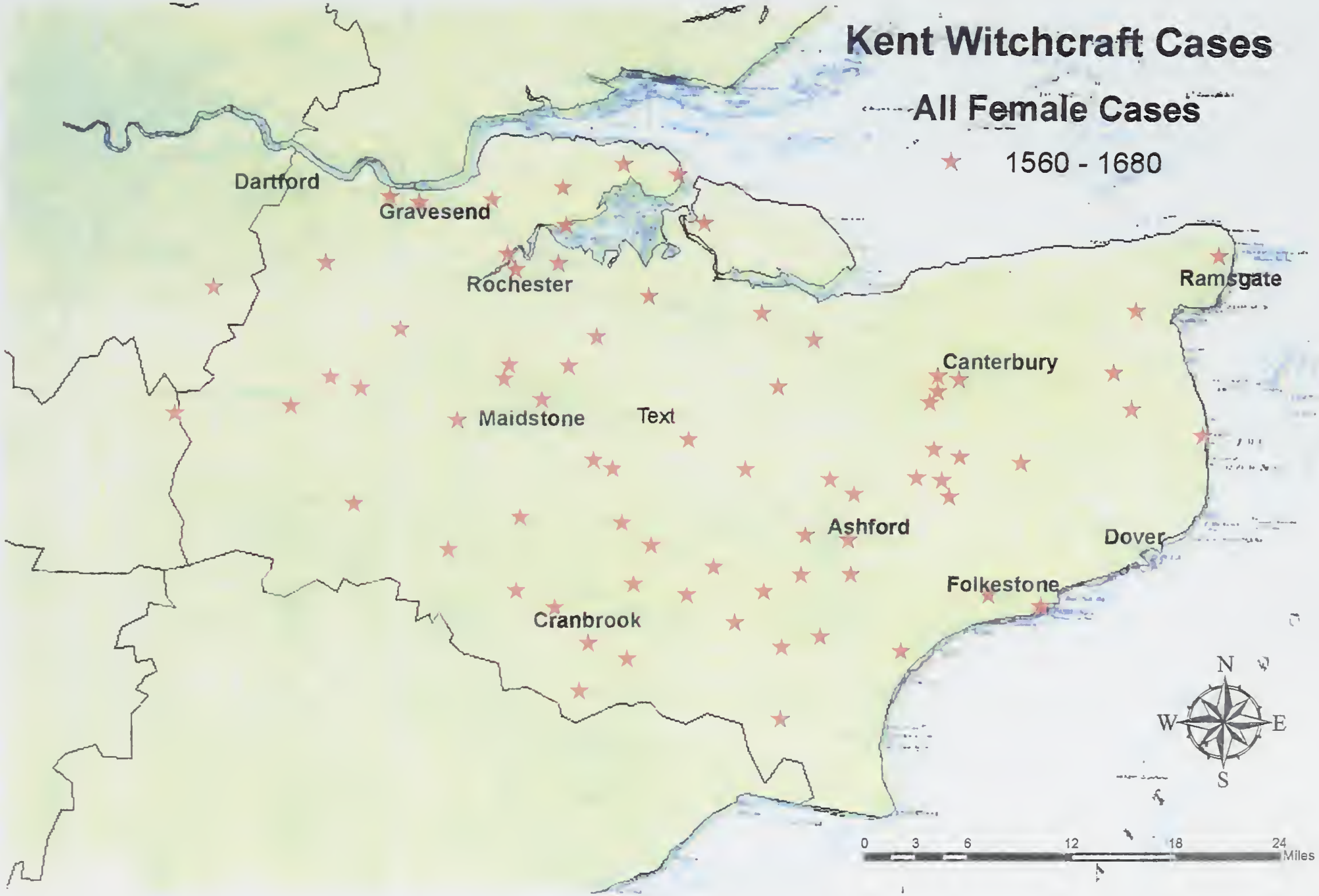
Kent Witchcraft Cases
All Female Cases
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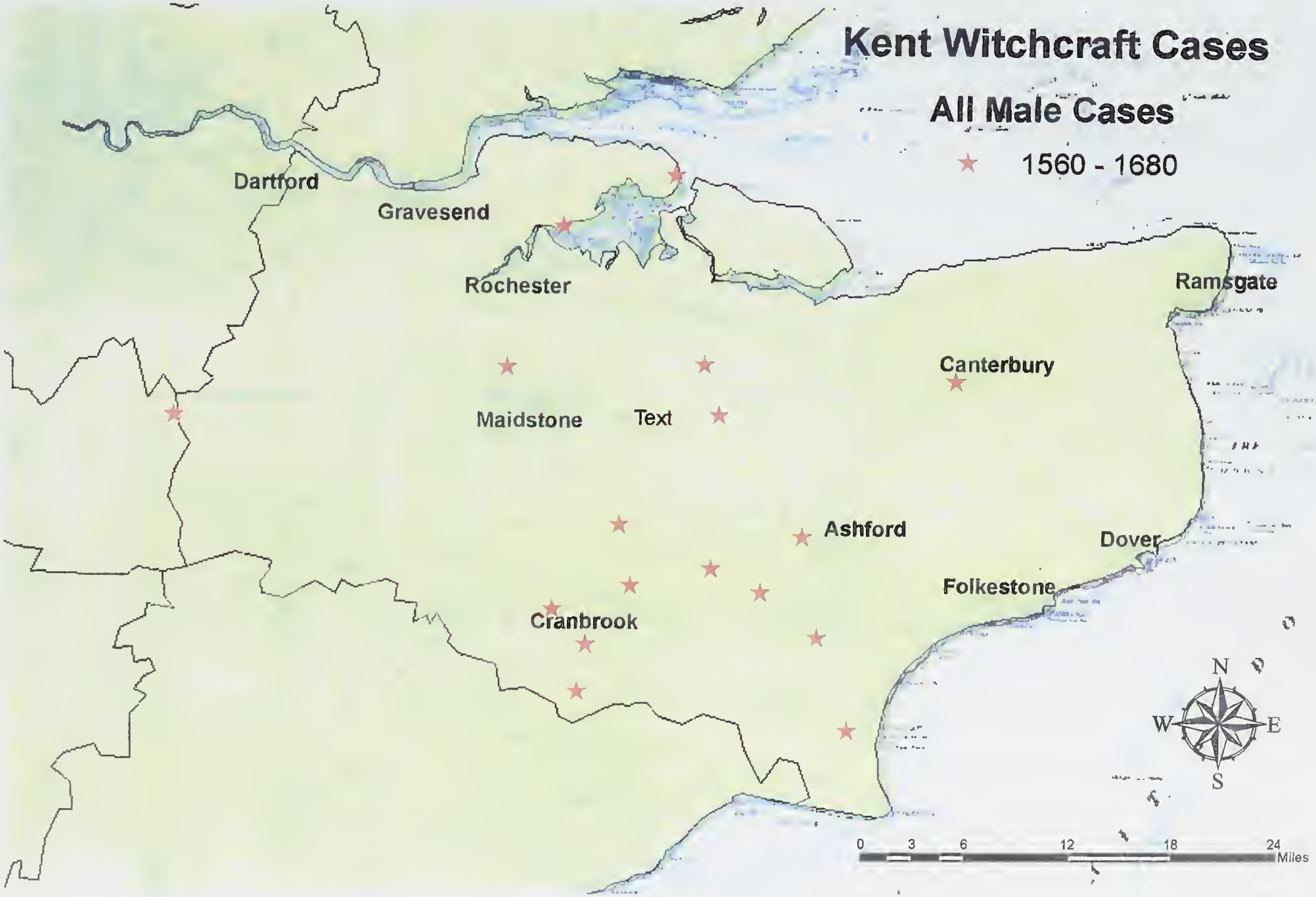
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All Male Cases
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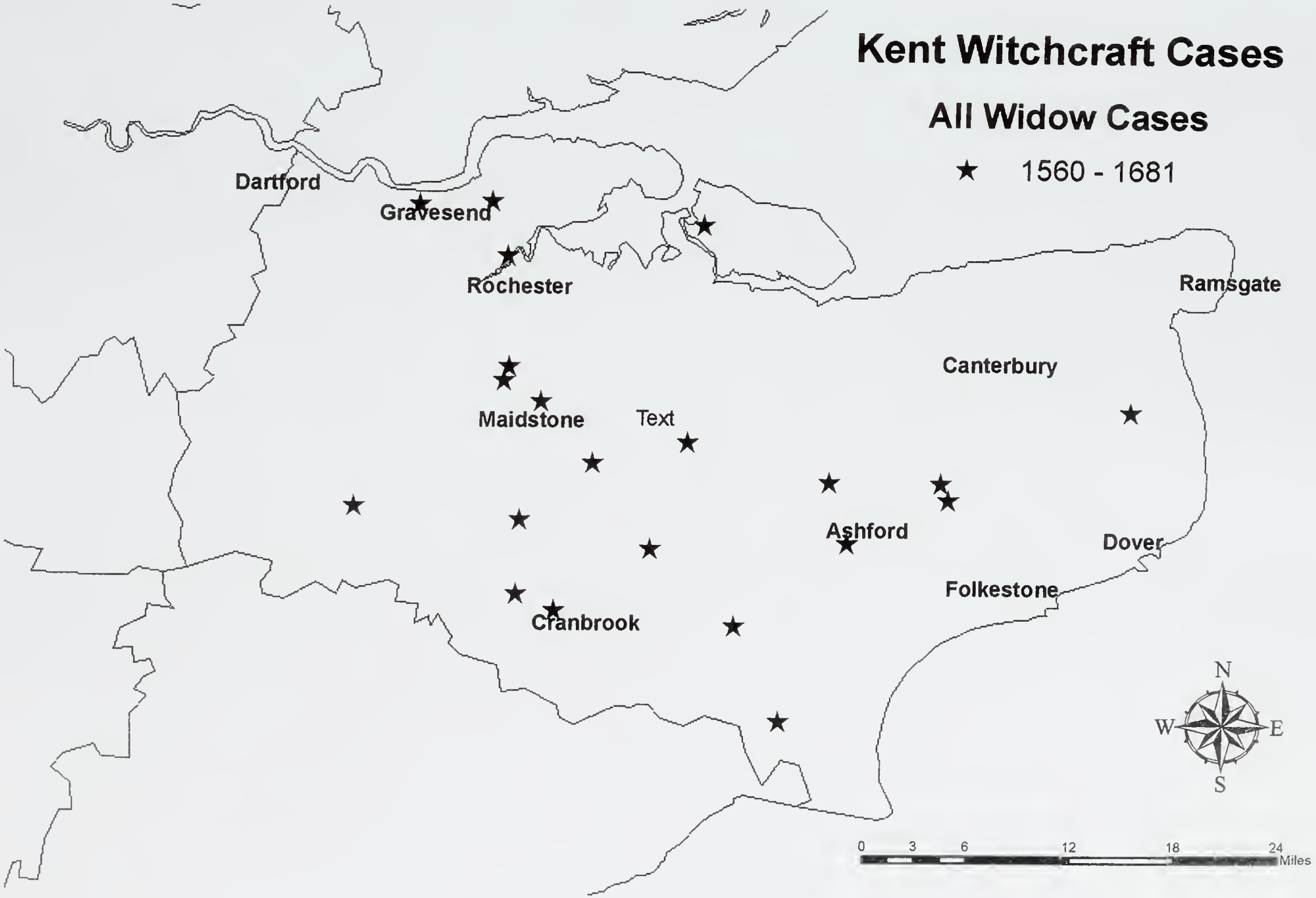
Kent Witchcraft Cases

All Widow Cases

★ 1560 - 1681



Kent Witchcraft Cases

All Married Cases

1560 - 1680

Dartford
Gravesend
Rochester
Ramsgate
Canterbury
Maidstone
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Ashford
Dover
Folkestone
Cranbrook

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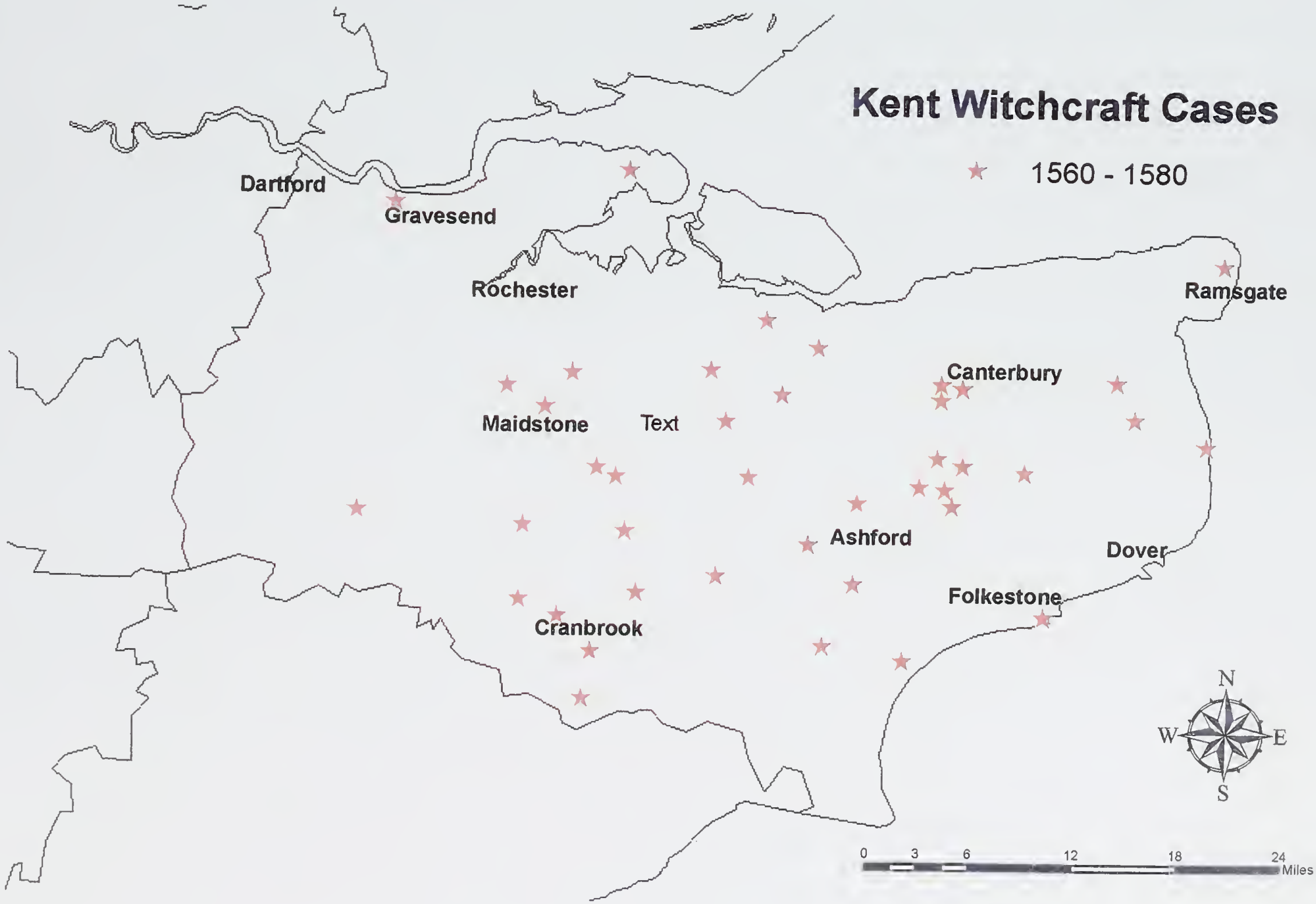
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Canterbury
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Kent Witchcraft Cases

★ 1601 - 1620

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Kent Witchcraft Cases
1620 - 1640
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Ashford
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Kent Witchcraft Cases
1640 - 1648
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Kent Witchcraft Cases

1649 - 1660

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Kent Witchcraft Cases

★ 1660 - 1680

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Canterbury
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Cranbrook

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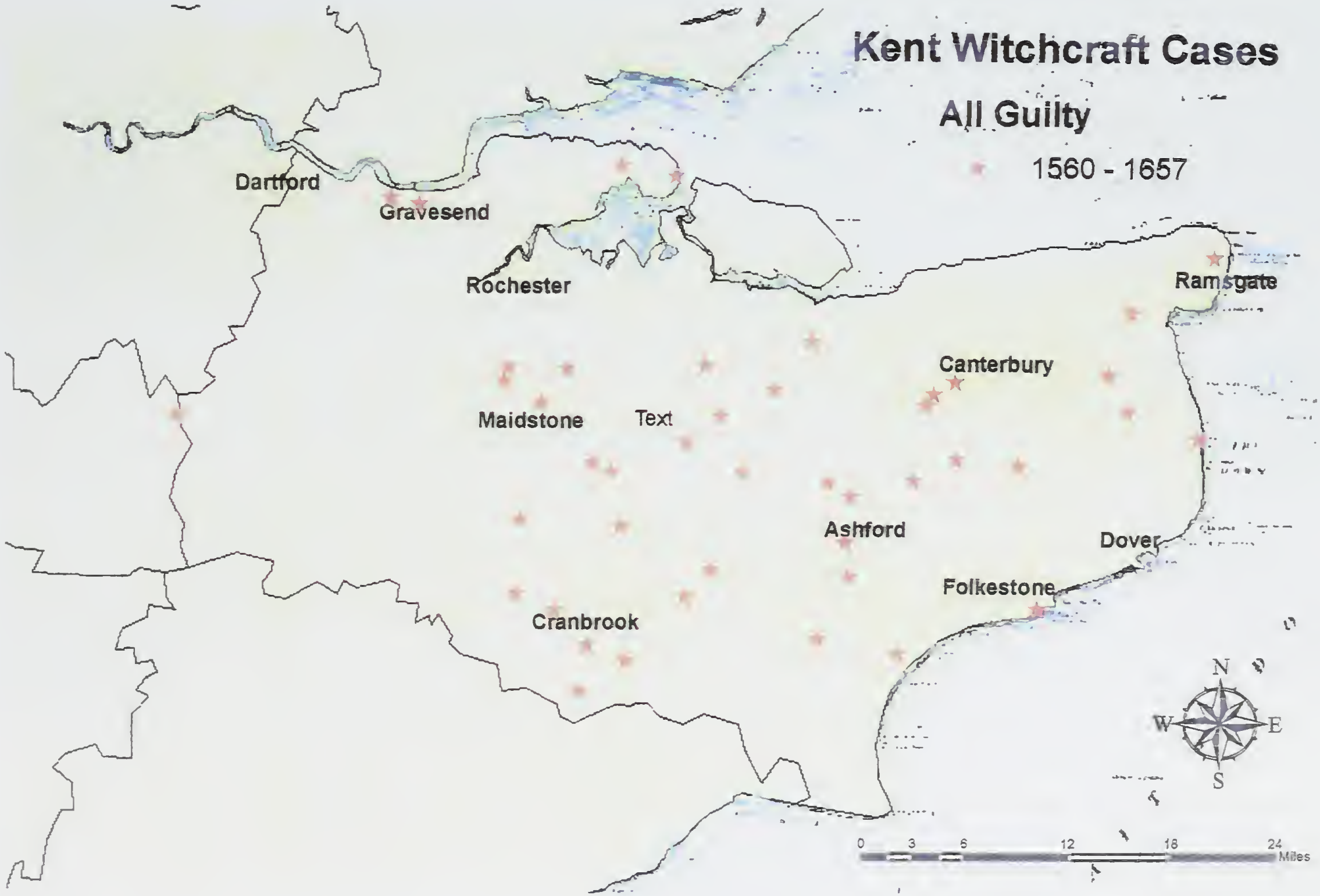
0 3 6 12 18 24 Miles


Kent Witchcraft Cases
All Guilty
1560 - 1657
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Rochester
Ramsgate
Canterbury
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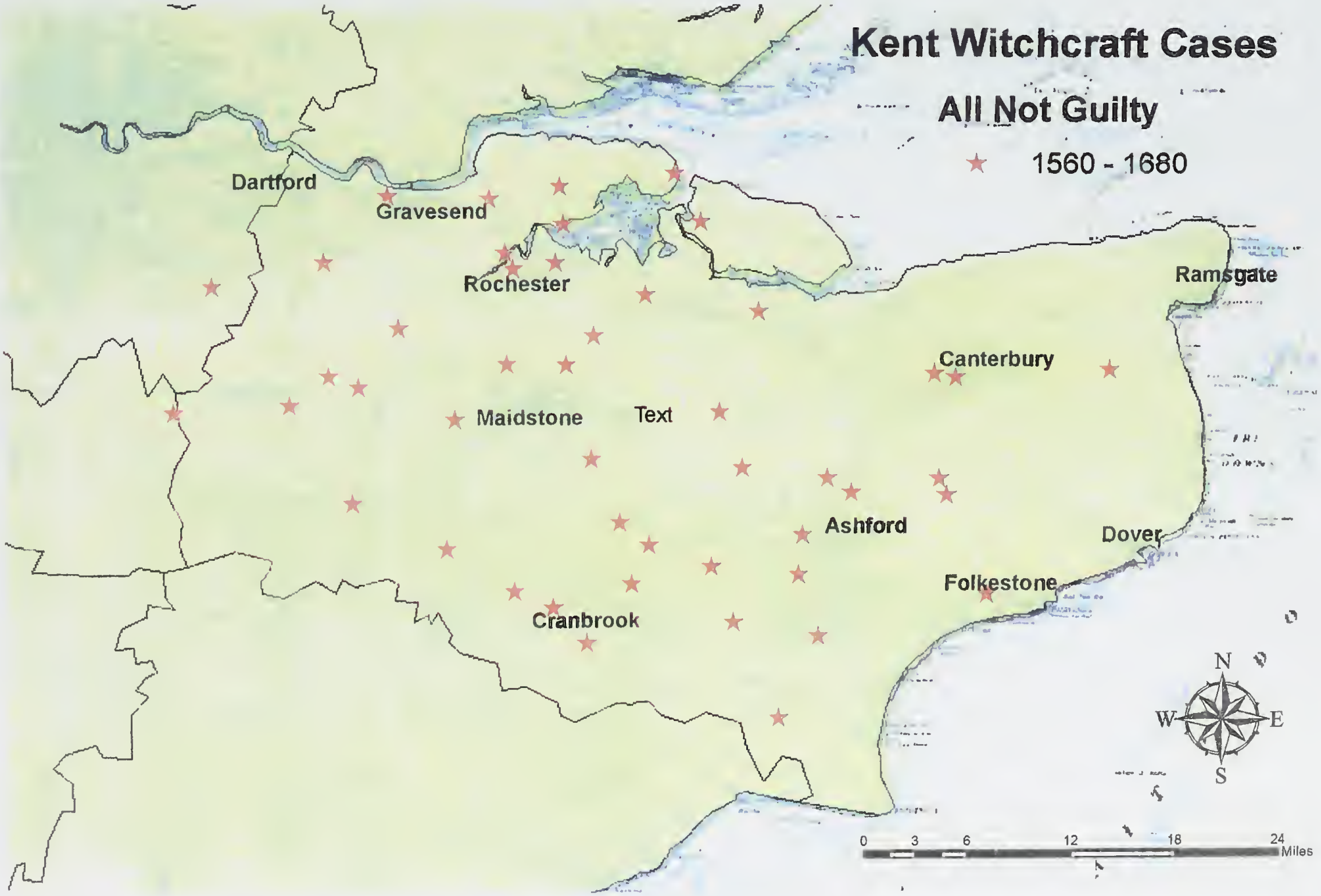
Kent Witchcraft Cases
All Not Guilty
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Rochester
Ramsgate
Canterbury
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Cranbrook
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Kent Witchcraft Cases

Guilty Cases

★ 1560 - 1620

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Gravesend
Rochester
Ramsgate
Canterbury
Maidstone
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Kent Witchcraft Cases

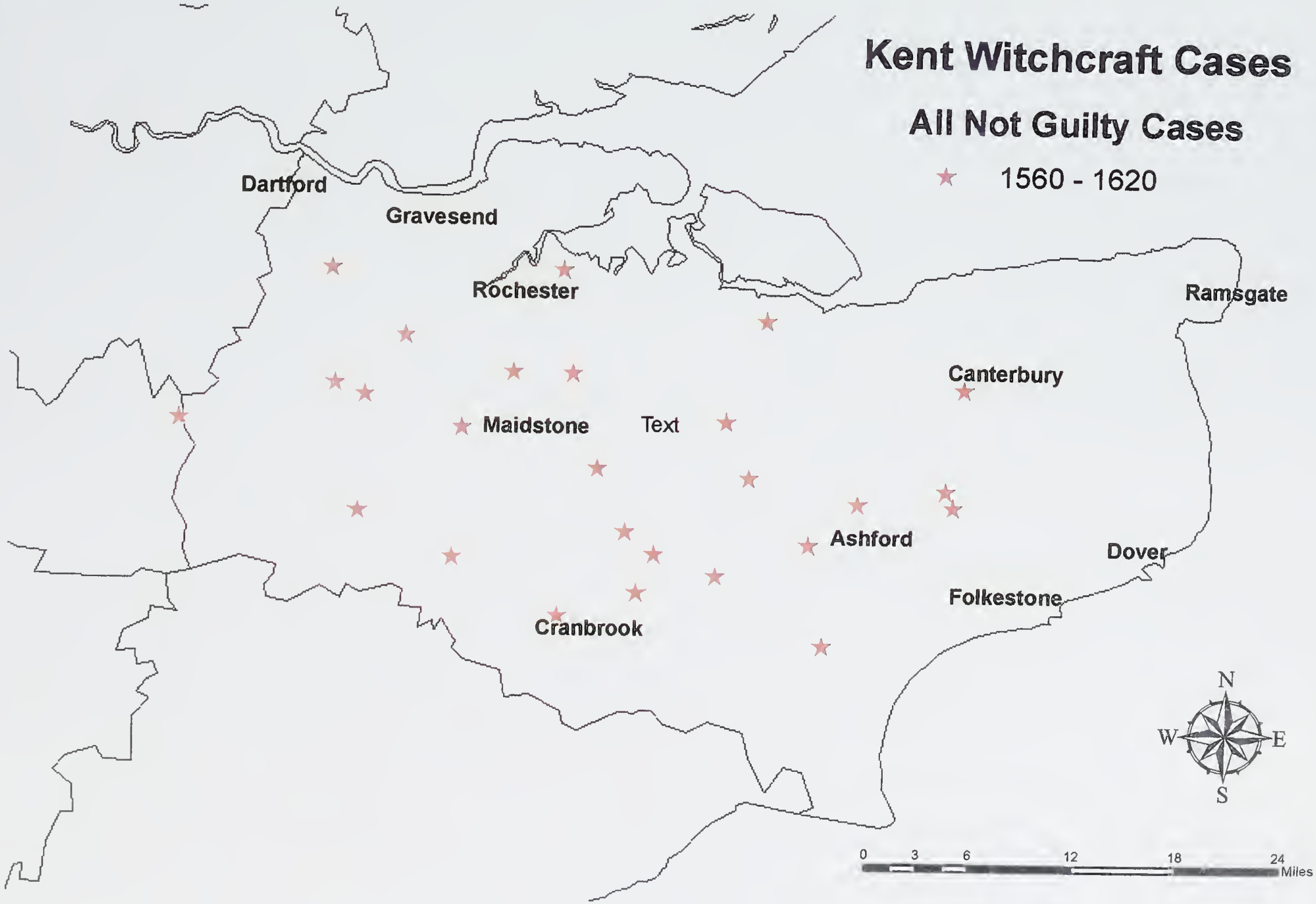
All Guilty Cases

★ 1620 - 1657

Kent Witchcraft Cases

All Not Guilty Cases

★ 1560 - 1620



Kent Witchcraft Cases

Not Guilty Cases

★ 1620 - 1680

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Now that we have traveled across the supernatural landscapes of both Kent and Normandy, it remains for us to put some kind of overall picture into place and to draw what lessons we can from this exploration. One of the most important results of this research is how localized expressions of the supernatural were in the early modern period. The "norm" of Norman witchcraft was male shepherds; the norm in Kent was married women. Their activities were similarly dissimilar: the shepherds were often mixed up in animal healings while the women were mixed up with the devil. Potions, prayers, and the consecrated host were common tools of the Norman witch, while blood and other bodily fluids bound the Kentish witch. These differences are not merely ones of kind but of substance. They express local beliefs, local fears, local ways of understanding how the world operated. To speak of a unified, early modern, popular supernatural belief is, thus, something of a misnomer. In each locality, a different belief system operated.

This importance of place is difficult to understand completely, as historians may never know the exact relationships that created certain features of these beliefs. The confinement of women accused of witchcraft in Normandy to certain specific regions expresses a very localized set of beliefs, yet discovering what those beliefs were would require very specific knowledge about those areas: their towns, their economies, their religion, and their day-to-day lives, knowledge that simply (at this point) does not exist. Similarly, the absence, in the extant Kent dossiers, of much deposition testimony robs the historian of the voice of the accused and accuser(s) in

most cases, leaving a similar void. One cannot know, perhaps, the exact relationship of place and belief, though we can certainly know what each place held to be true.

The foundations and motivations for making an accusation of witchcraft varied: a strategy in local power structures, a response to social stress, an outlet for social jealousy, and, most importantly, an expression of a truth. When Thomas Goddard made vaguely magical threats against his neighbors as he jockeyed for economic stability and success in Cranford, he was not using the supernatural to express his belief about the world; rather, he was using that belief as a tool to gain other advantages—a social strategy of power. When the Larkins and Bancks argued in Shadoxhurst and ended up in court, their argument used the supernatural as a means to "one up" their opposition. When Levilain was accused of witchcraft, his response was not a tactical one. Levilain revealed the underlying reality of popular beliefs about the world. In his case, as in Theirry's, the dossiers reveal statements about how their world was believed to operate and the relationship that magic played in that operation.

Much has been written about the demystification of the world, the loss of a supernatural understanding of nature that occurred over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The expressions of the "real" cases of magic—those where the supernatural was truly in play—show that people's supernatural understanding of the early modern world was not merely a conceptual idea about nature but about their entire life. Levilain merely illustrates the way magic permeated the lives of those who lived by their work. Their understanding of magic was not simply that it reflected nature but that it was a tool, a functioning, practical hammer (of a kind), to be utilized to achieve a specific end. Levilain speaks of taking care of his sheep by using his dogs, moving his

flocks, and saying prayers to get holy "persons" to guard them, all in the same breath. All of these "tools" are used to protect his livelihood and his life, and are similar in his mind.

Certainly these beliefs also functioned to express resistance to a differing elite understanding of the world. One of the marked features of the judges in both Kent and Normandy was their preoccupation with the devil and the linking of magic to demonic pacts. The judge in Levilain's case continually sought avenues to link Levilain's testimony to his own understanding of what "magic" represented, an example of the devil working in the world. The pamphlet report of the four Kentish women in 1645 reveals the same preoccupation. The response of some of the accused was to use magic not merely as a means to resist but also to produce a space of agency, to express their understanding of how their world operated. In a sense, the trial allowed popular culture the freedom to both resist elite culture and express its nature simultaneously.

The importance of the trial went beyond allowing expressions of belief. The structural features of Norman and Kentish legal processes went beyond merely providing space for expression of belief. These systems controlled those beliefs as well. Normandy contains over two times the number of cases as Kent. While it is also a larger geographical area, the plethora of local, secondary courts throughout the region allowed for a more varied expression of belief than did the Assize circuit in Kent. The limited nature of court resources in Kent (which dictated the use of plea bargaining) similarly limited the expression of Kentish beliefs. While French laws did not specify the kinds of magical behavior outlawed, English laws did. Again, the limited nature of the English legal process controlled the kinds of supernatural controversies it decided.

The large number of Kentish women accused of killing another person should not surprise us, as English law consistently provided the death penalty for that act.

Another difference between the two regions is the episodic nature of the appearance of these cases. In the Norman data, witchcraft accusations seem to cluster. That is, in any given year, there were either large numbers (five or greater) or very few. In a sense, Normans seem to have experienced magic use as a kind of virus: it came in waves of intensity, high in some years, low in others. If one got infected, there seemed to be a passing of the "disease" locally. Kentish accusations were more of a constant background, with a slow rise in intensity, followed by a sharp decline. As with the Norman experience of the Protestant "cancer," the French had generally larger outbreaks of witchcraft accusations, the English, a constant battle.

That difference between Norman and Kentish accusations illustrates the nature of popular fears of witchcraft in each place as well. The English were more afraid of magic, yet unconcerned about its appearance. The French were very concerned about witches, but not very afraid. This difference helps explain why there were so many Norman cases, yet they were dealt with very routinely. Magic scared the French, and they reacted. Forming perhaps a more regular and consistent feature of their lives, magic (because of its unlimited nature) was a source of great fear. The dossiers imply this fear. However, because of that same normality, the Norman culture developed systems to mediate those fears. In Kent, on the other hand, there seems to have been more fear about the power of magic, yet less concern. The pamphlets and court records reveal a more dramatic response and tone than the Norman records do. However, there were far fewer Kentish cases.

These fears and concerns also allow a historian to begin to map out the system of the early modern sacred. The supernatural provided a cohesive picture of the way life and nature worked. Beyond its function as a tool, the supernatural had an ability to mirror, to replicate life and nature simultaneously. Going beyond merely solving problems or challenges, the supernatural solidified the relationships between man and nature. For us, reason and rationality tie together various aspects of our lives—the paradigms of science meld our lives and our natural world. For those living in early modern Kent and Normandy, magic performed a similar function, echoing what religion assured everyone was true: power permeated their entire world. Levilain does not stop talking about his prayers not because he cannot see the danger of revealing them to the judge, but because he forgets that they are wrong. How could something so fundamental be wrong?

However, the power of magic does not explain why such specific types of people were accused of its use. If magic was so deeply imbued in their world, why so many shepherds, why so many married women? In order to generate the outrage necessary to be so targeted, both of these groups must have been doing something (or, more likely, a combination of things) to engender the attention they received. The Norman shepherds are the easier of the two to offer an explanation for. As the sources indicate, shepherds were an economically successful and locally mobile force. Given the political and material chaos reigning in Normandy at this time, shepherds would have stood out—among their neighbors—as looking different. Operating more as forces of the emerging cash and market systems, they would have drawn the ire of more traditional popular figures. Finally, and especially from the 1640s onward, as the

Catholic Church increasingly attempted to bring France under the Counter-Reformation's heel, shepherds would have been viewed as a group that might slip through. Even if they were not Protestants, they represented too free of a social group to remain unattended to. All of these factors might explain why shepherds were so frequently a target in Normandy. Both Levilain and Thiemy also provide another reason: for whatever reason, shepherds also regularly refused to submit.

When we seek a similar explanation for Kentish married women, the search is much more difficult. What seems to be true in England is that women were viewed as more likely users of magic and, thus, women generally were likely to be accused. Also, the geographical spread of accusations indicates that economies played a large role in determining where such accusations happened. The more threatened economic areas in Kent—the Weald, for example—saw more accusations than other, more successful centers. As women with families might be more aggressive in their decisions to seek out economic advantages, they might also be more readily seen as users of magic. While Thomas Goddard was a male, the attribution of magical acts to his aggressive economic decisions provides the kind of paradigm that might explain the large number of accusations against married women.

In the end, the reality of the multiplicities of early modern popular culture makes the task of deciphering the nuances of early modern supernatural beliefs difficult. The example of the wedding reception joke gone bad in Rouen provides a caution that not all of this was life or death (at the popular level; clearly the elite took a vastly different view of what is "funny"). As we poke fun at reason and science, Beuse and Moreau poked fun at the power of the fear of magic. This multiplicity is even more

localized than simply the regions of Kent and Normandy. An interesting question is whether Thierry and Levilain would recognize the other as doing the "same" thing. Looking backward, we view them as *devins*. If asked, I am unsure whether they would have said the same of the other.

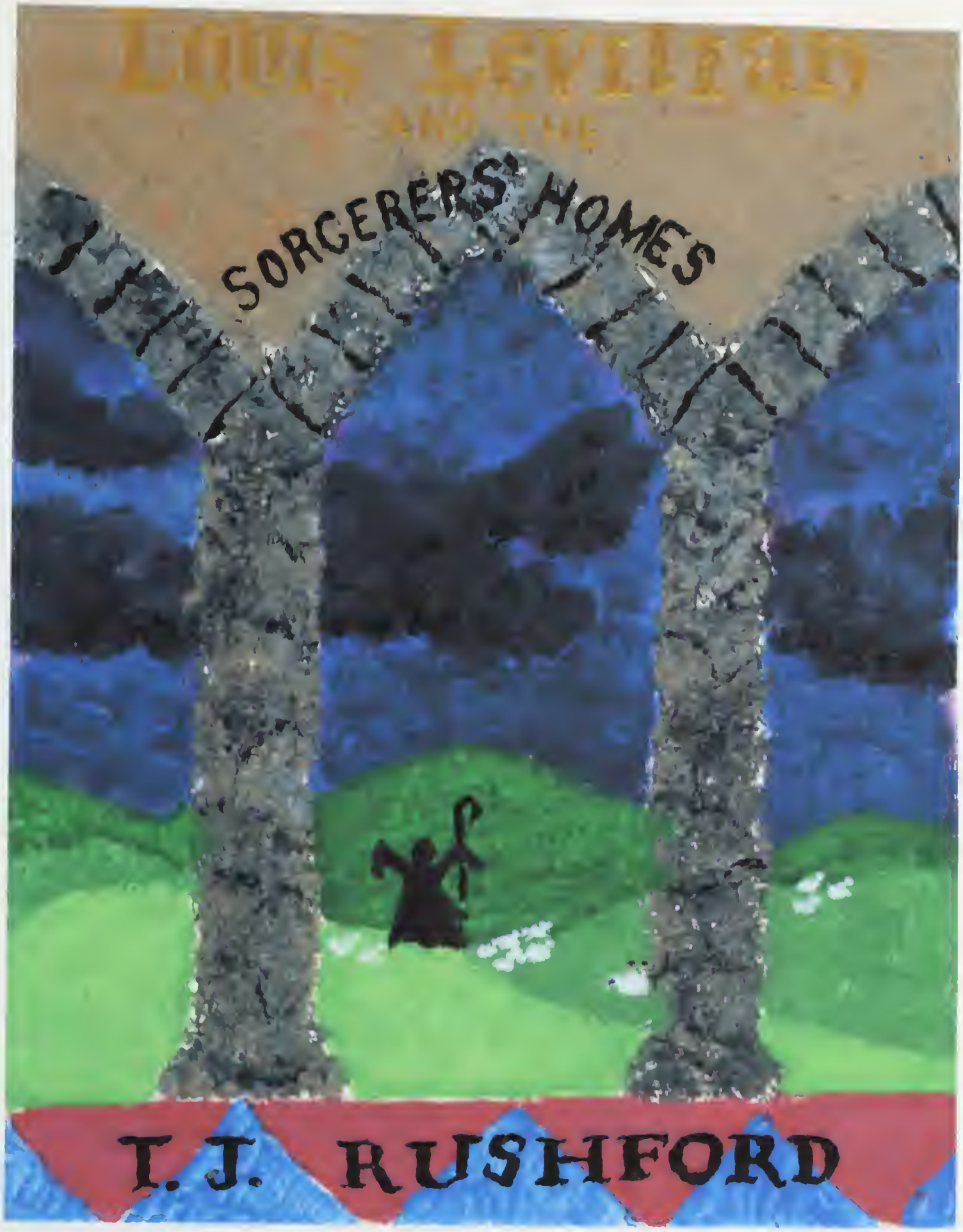


Figure 5.1: Ending Illustration
Source: Beth Fernald, Artist

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